November 2019 - January, 2020

Detroiters Celebrate Knights and Daughters Anniversaries

By NAS Dr. Gary Zamanigian

On November 16th, the Knights of Vartan Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge 100th and the Daughters of Vartan Zabelle Chapter 70th Anniversaries were celebrated with an elaborate dinner-dance in Detroit with over 200 guests. Special guest in attendance from Fresno, California was Knights of Vartan Grand Commander Steven R. Adams who also made an official visitation to the local Lodge (Tahlij) and met with Past Grand Commanders Vahram G. Fantazian, Simon Javizian, Edward H. Korkoian and Dr. Gary Zamanigian.

Shavarshan Lodge was instituted in 1918. It was named “SHA varshan” after the sacred battle-

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field where Vartan the Brave and his comrades fell, in defense of their Christian faith and for the Freedom of Conscience of the Armenian People. Nareg Lodge was instituted in 1954. The name “NAREG” was chosen in honor of St. Gregory of Nareg, the tenth century Armenian theologian and poet, who is considered to be the most outstanding figure in the Armenian literary heritage. The two Lodges have been working side by side and eventually on May 1, 1996, the two Lodges in Detroit merged as Nareg-Shavarshan.

The Lodge has contributed to the growth and advancement of the Knights of Vartan nationally under the wise leadership of its illustrious sons; Alex Manoogian, Hagop S. Derderian, Vahram G. Fantazian, Simon Javizian, Edward H, Korkoian and Dr. Gary Zamanigian as Grand Commanders of the Brotherhood.

Zabelle Chapter was established on September 30, 1950 in Detroit, MI. It was named after Queen Zabelle, the daughter of King Levon I. Mrs. Marie Manoogian was the first Dirouhie, who served from 1950-1952. Zabelle Chapter and Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge have an extremely close and warm relationship. They work together to further the goals of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan.

After numerous activities during last 100 years, now was the time for Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge and Zabelle Chapter to celebrate their 100th and 70th anniversaries on November 16, 2019. Upon arrival, guests entered an elegantly ornamented ballroom and then were treated to a sumptuous assortment of Armenian hors d’oeuvres after which Past Grand Commander Vahram Fantazian welcomed everyone and invited Asbed Rev. Fr. Armash Bagdasarian, Rev. Fr. Garabed Kochakian, Pastor Hagop Haroutunian and Msgr. Andon Atamian to say Grace. A delicious gourmet dinner was prepared and then presented with French banquet service.

Following Dinner, the Commander of Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge, Kazar Terterian, and the Matron of Zabelle Chapter, Lisa Aglamishian thanked everyone for attending the dinner-dance on this special occasion. A video, prepared by the Knights of Vartan Communications Office Liaison in Armenia Gohar Palyan, of the Knights of Vartan School #106 gymnasium renovation in Yerevan, sponsored by Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge and Zabelle Chapter, was then shown. More than $30,000 was raised by the Knights and Daughters in Detroit to make the gymnasium renovation a reality. Next, on behalf of the Daughters of Vartan Grand Matron Alice Kalustian of Los Angeles, Detroitor Gloria Korkoian, the Midwest Grand District Representative, presented 100th and 70th Anniversary Certificates to Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge Commander Terterian and Zabelle Chapter Matron Aglamishian respectively.

The program proceeded with the Knights of Vartan Midwest Grand District Representative Dr. Larry Farsakian from Chicago introducing Grand Commander Steven R. Adams who spoke eloquently, motivating and inspiring everyone present. He then presented a 100th Anniversary Certificate to the Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge Commander.

“100 years ago the Detroit Armenians didn’t have Armenian established churches nor priests nor organizations that could provide any aid but the Armenians of that era had two important qualities: Firstly: Belief in God and Secondly Armenian National Spirit. And because of these qualities they thought about establishing this organization to help, to the best of their abilities, the broken genocide Armenian victims who were in dire need of help. This evening we have come together to observe 100 years of service to the Armenian people” said Commander Kazar P. Terterian during his speech.

The night continued with everyone listening to the talented singer Kevork Artinian and dancing to the music of His All Star Band. The entire evening was extraordinary and went on well into the early morning hours.

Everyone enjoyed the celebration and it was an opportunity to remember all the charities the Lodge and Chapter did over the years together. Every year they hold different events to raise funds. The raised funds from different activities supported a number of institutions such as the Sourp Khach Tbrevank in Istanbul, spearheading the establishment of the Armenian Research Center at the University of Michigan-Dearborn and assuring the accreditation of the A.G.B.U. Alex & Marie Manoogian School in Southfield, promoting Armenian relief programs, generously contributing to the St. John Armenian Church Building Fund Campaign, sponsoring social dances and various youth
activities. They helped to set up and launch A.G.B.U’s “Camp Ararat”.

The Knights of Vartan was ready to face the challenges of the 1988 earthquake in Gyumri as well as the opportunities brought about by the subsequent independence of the Republic of Armenia. It was in 1988 then Shavarshan Lodge, raised over $150,000 for earthquake relief for Armenia. Over the years Na-neg-Shavarshan contributed to the humanitarian assistance programs of the Brotherhood. In 2008 money was raised to send Anesthesiology Equipment to the medical center in the city of Gyumri, Armenia. During the financial crunch of 2009 the Knights and Daugh-
ters of Vartan raised $20,000 at a New Year’s Eve Celebration, and equally distributed the proceeds among the four Armenian Churches of Greater Detroit. For the last twelve years Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge facilitated “Armenia Fest” a free public event at the historic Farmers Market in Royal Oak Michigan, primarily designed to bring the Armenian Community together and at the same time to showcase our rich cultural heritage to the general public. Funds raised at “Arme-
nia Fest” are donated to humanitarian projects especially in recent years to the Syrian Relief Fund, supporting annual commemorations of Vartanantz and April 24 with the Detroit metropolitan community.

Like their namesake, the Sisters of Zabelle Chapter are dedicated and committed to preserving and sharing Armenian religion, history and culture. Zabelle Chapter’s annual fundraiser Manti & More, which is in its 20th year, benefits their charitable donations along with other fundraising events. The amount of the annual donations is based on proceeds from fund rais-

As we embark on a new millennia, Nareg-Shavarshan Lodge remains steadfast to the aims and aspirations of its Founding Fathers and its Knightly Principles, to defend the Armenian Churches, preserve our rich cultural heritage, foster the true spirit of friendship and cooperation among all Armenians, practice charity and benevolence, cherish morality, justice, truthfulness and as loyal citizens uphold and defend the Constitution of the United States.

As Knights of noble heritage onward we will march in the footsteps of our Founding Fathers with the undying faith that ours is Victory!

Photos by NS Vaughn Masropian and Drew Zamani-gian.
A who’s who of dignitaries, friends, family members, and colleagues gathered on November 17th to wish Nakhgin Sbarabed Jack Medzorian a happy ninety-third birthday and to thank him for his service to Armenians and to Armenia which he and his wife Eva have visited nearly one hundred times since 1972. The gala, which was held in Keljik Hall at the Saint James Armenian Church Cultural Center in Watertown and was hosted by the Knights of Vartan Ararat Talij No. 1 and The Daughters of Vartan Arpie Otyag No. 9. Medzorian twice served as Commander of Ararat Tahlij during the 1990’s. Ararat Tahlij Sbarabed Arghishti Chaparian and Arpie Otyag Diroohie Dr. Knarik Arkun welcomed the guests and then introduced as Master of Ceremonies, family friend and Asbed Paul Boghosian. Prayers were offered by Archpriest and Nakhgin Sbarabed Antranig Baljian and Reverend Father Arakel Aljalian. The celebration began with a video highlighting the many humanitarian projects in Armenia that Jack Medzorian has been involved with, including the delivery of educational supplies and medical equipment to remote areas of the country. The video also included good wishes to Jack by the former principal of what is now the Knights of Vartan School No. 106 in Yerevan. Dr. Galik Dallakyan of the Artsvaberd Hospital in Armenia’s Tavush Region thanked Jack for the portable ultrasound machines that were delivered to the medical facility. Other messages of gratitude came from Ashot Yeghiazaryan and Rouzanne Sakanyan of The Fuller Center for Housing. The high praise for Jack Medzorian was also echoed by the Knights and Daughters of Vartan. Liaison Gohar Palyan described how Medzorian and his wife would visit the remote border villages of Armenia, meeting with locals and making friends despite the dangers involved with traveling to those areas. Knights of Vartan Grand Commander Steven Adams, in his recorded remarks, commended Jack Medzorian for all the help he has given to Armenia, noting that his contributions are usually made quietly and without fanfare. Adams said that Medzorian embodies what it means to be a Knight of Vartan. The Governor of Tavush Region in Armenia echoed those sentiments in a written letter to Jack Medzorian. Hayk Chobanyan wrote, “The energy you and Mrs. Eva Medzorian put into the development of Tavush and the generosity you have shown has motivated all of us to work hard so that one day we may be able to help others, as you have helped those when they needed your support.”

Among those on hand to honor Jack Medzorian in person was Vigen Sarkysyan, the former Defense Minister of the Republic of Armenia. On the local political side, Middlesex County Sheriff Peter Koutoujian and State Representative David Muradian of Worcester, Massachusetts both presented Jack Medzorian with proclamations. One was from the Governor and Lieutenant Governor of Massachusetts and the other from the Middlesex County Sheriff’s office. Eloquent words of thanks and praise were also bestowed upon Mr. Medzorian by representatives of some of the many organizations that he is affiliated with. Among them were Yervant Chekijian, Chairman of NAASR’s Board of Directors, George Haroutunian, Commander of the Armenian American Veterans of Greater Boston, Ara Balikian, Chairman of the AGBU New England District Committee, Alisa Stepanian, President of the Cambridge Yerevan Sister City Association, Edward Kazanjian of the Council of Armenian Executives and Nelson Stepanian, New England District Representative for the Knights of Vartan.

There was no shortage of entertainment during the gala for Jack Medzorian. It all began with a perfor-
formance by a soloist with the Erebuni Dance Ensemble. On the musical side, grandchildren Alex Medzorian and Angelina Faletti sang a toe tapping rendition of “Too Marvelous For Words”, made famous by Frank Sinatra, while their grandmother, Eva Medzorian, serenaded the guests with the ballad, “Hayasdan.” Eva Maria Medzorian expressed her love for her grandfather with a heartfelt message which she delivered with him at her side. Jack and Eva Medzorian were joined at the gala by their four children and four of their five grandchildren along with cousins and other relatives. It was his family whom Jack Medzorian thanked first when he stepped to the podium. He began by thanking his wife Eva, whom he described as beautiful in heart and soul and that they met while he was Superintendent of the Saint James Armenian Church Sunday School and she was a singer in the church choir. In thanking the clergy in attendance, Medzorian noted that when the Knights of Vartan was formed in 1916, it was founded mostly by clergy from all Christian denominations. Mr. Medzorian recounted the experiences that had the greatest influence on his life including running his high school newspaper in Arlington, Massachusetts, serving in the US Army toward the end of World War Two and then helping to create what became known as the Cpl. Paul Marsoubian AMVETS Post 41. He also highlighted his more than 40 years at Baird Corporation where he started as a junior accountant and later became one of the company’s top executives. After acknowledging the many Armenian organizations with which he has been involved, Jack Medzorian turned his attention to the Knights of Vartan which he joined in 1986. He told his guests that the reason he joined was because he and his fellow Knights shared many common values including their Christian faith and preserving the ancient and rich heritage of Armenia. Medzorian described the formation of the Knights and Daughters of Vartan flagship School-Aid Program, an offspring of a similar program begun by CYSCA. He thanked the Robert Semonian Foundation and other benefactors for funding five border village kindergarten projects and most recently, a high school gym renovation in Artsvaberd and a women’s resource center in the border town of Berd in Tavush Region. Medzorian also talked about his involvement in the Armenia Medical Aid Project which began in 1997 through Ararat Lodge with the shipment of ten forty foot containers to hospitals throughout Armenia. Most recently, 5 ultrasound machines were donated including four portable ultrasounds through the Robert Semonian Foundation. At the conclusion of his remarks, Jack Medzorian announced that he and his wife would make a donation through Ararat Lodge to the Women’s Resource Center in Berd. He then expressed his appreciation to the gala’s planning committee, the Knights of Ararat Lodge, The Daughters of Arpie Otyag and all the volunteers and donors who made the event such a success.
On Oct 27 2019 the Armenian American Veterans of Greater Boston celebrated its 67th anniversary with a Membership Appreciation Banquet, honoring its oldest member Harry Keshishian, soon to be 98 years old in Dec. 2019. The event, which follows a recent annual tradition, was held at the newly renovated Oakley Country Club in Watertown, MA. This Armenian American Veterans organization was formed in 1952, became a part of the Amvets National Organization, a couple of years later, and was known as the Cpl Paul S. Marsoubian Amvets Post 41, until a couple of years ago when it became affiliated with the AGBU.

This event was supported by Ararat Lodge Past Commanders George Haroutunian, now Post Commander of the Veterans Organization and Past Commander Jack Medzorian, trustee and lone survivor of the eleven founders who formed the Veterans organization. Many Knights of Vartan Ararat Lodge members were present, some who are also veterans.

80 members and guests attended including invited widows of deceased members and enjoyed a delicious menu and music by Leon Janikian and his band that played many Armenian favorites as the crowd got up and danced.

Post Commander George Haroutunian officiated the event as MC. He told about the scholarship program for members of Amvets family and invited Harold Partamian, Scholarship Committee Chairman, to report results to date, totaling $170,500 awarded since inception of the plan in 2017 to 50 students who are family members of Amvets past and present. He urged that all those who qualify as immediate family apply in the next cycle if they have not already done so, which runs from Jan 1 to Apr 30, 2020.

Post Commander George then mentioned the various donations made during the past year to charities, which included; St. Stephens’ Armenian School Scholarship Funs, AMMA celebration for its 100th year in USA, Armenian Heritage Park, NAASR for grand opening of their new headquarters, Holiday meal for 350 frontline soldiers in Armenia on the Army holiday Jan 28 (which makes the third year for this project), Armenian Women’s Resource Center in Yerevan, Armenian Nursing Home for additional Hoyer lifts, NE Home for Vets, VA Veterans’ Fund at VA Hospital, Ararat Youth Conference Center, Armenian Veterans of the 4 day war housing damaged during the war, and Orphans of the 4 day war. These donations have been made possible by the funds received from the sale of our building on Grove Street.

George introduced his executive committee, consisting of himself as Commander, First Vice Commander Edward DerKazarian, 2nd Vice Commander, Robert Kaprielian, John Sahagian Finance Officer, and Jack Medzorian, Vahan Berberian, and George Haroutunian as Trustees. The event was co-managed by Ed DerKazarian and Walter Nahabedian and his wife, who planned and managed all the details of the event. Credit was given to Vahan Berberian, who ran the event for a number of years. Post Commander George then introduced Harry Keshishian, who we learned was a mentor to George when he was a teenager, in building scale models of flyable airplanes. Harry told about his experience in during World War 11. He spoke about the national clubs he belonged to and winning the national trophy for the best model planes. He is a gentle, modest person with a strong love for his national heritage and comrades.

Post Commander George then read off the names of our deceased members during the past year and asked for a moment of silence in their memory. These deceased brothers were: Jack Achmakjian, Jack Eordikian, Elliot Vanetsian, Nishan Berberian, Edward Orchanian, Sr., Samuel Zouranjian, Charles Kasparian, and Peter Talanian.

Photos were taken by David Medzorian.
Good evening. It is a pleasure to be here. What an extraordinary evening tonight, doing what we have become better at in our community: celebrating the hard-earned contributions of serious people. We weren’t always as good, but we have learned. And I couldn’t be more proud of the presence of all of you tonight to honor someone as special as Prof. Taner Akcam.

A great deal has been said tonight. I will repeat some of it, I will correct some of it, and I will say a few more things to try to give a flavor of who Taner Akcam is. My focus will be not so much the man he has become and who you have come to know, but on the sometimes surprising path he took to get there.

A number of years ago, I remarked to Robert Morgenthau, the longtime District Attorney for the City of New York and the grandson of Ambassador Henry Morgenthau, that, as a child growing up in Los Angeles in the 1960s, I had grown up in the shadow of Ambassador Morgenthau’s story. I was referring, of course, to Ambassador Morgenthau’s memoir of his time in the Ottoman Empire during the Armenian Genocide. So many of us here this evening did. In fact, one of my early memories is when, as a small child, I carried a candle alongside a genocide survivor during the groundbreaking ceremony for the Armenian Genocide Monument in Montebello, CA. As many of you know, the Monument, as we called it, was the first such memorial on public soil in the United States. Several years prior to this event, my mother had met Richard Hovanessian, then a young scholar at UCLA—his name has been mentioned numerous times tonight—and they became fast friends. My mother edited Richard’s dissertation, which became his Armenia: On the Road to Independence, and the first volumes of his multi-volume, The Republic of Armenia. Our family’s friendship with the Hovanesians has been a part of my life for as long as I can remember. As such, the story of the genocide and the scholarly work to understand it and confront denialism was part of my life from my earliest memories.

But for someone like Taner and so many who grew up in Turkey, we cannot tell the same story. The Armenian Genocide was not taught in the schools. Certainly, there were whispers in the community—people in the villages remembered which houses were inhabited by Armenians, and thereby haunted, and which by Turks. But the Armenian Genocide was—and still is not—taught in Turkish schools or spoken about openly. Indeed, it remains illegal to refer to the Armenian Genocide in Turkey. Thus, for someone like Taner to become one of the foremost scholars on the Armenian Genocide worldwide, simply was not a foregone conclusion. Something happened along the way to generate a small seed and ignite his courage that, over the course of his life, grew and blossomed.

Taner’s commitment to finding the truth in support of democratic values, his true courage in searching for the truth, didn’t find its first expression in his support of the Armenians. There is a wonderful photo in tonight’s booklet where Taner looks very young—because he was young once—and very serious. This photo was taken when he was working with the Kurdish resistance back in the 1970s, working to try to bring change to Turkey. For Taner always understood that something had to change in his home country if true democracy and a real future would have the chance of emerging. He built on that commitment at great cost.

While with the Kurdish resistance, Taner ran afoul of — continued on page 8
the Turkish authorities and was imprisoned. Yet he somehow, and with great courage and focus, made his way out of prison and to Europe where he then pursued his education. During his time in prison, Taner realized that change can come in one of two ways. It can come violently as in the resistance or it can come by changing the beliefs of people through serious academic work that brings the truth out in the open. The later course is the path that Taner chose at that very significant transition point in his life. And this choice to follow a different path from the one on which he had been focused formed the foundation of his commitment to truth even in the face of great personal threat and danger.

I believe that this experience, as well as the values he inherited from his parents, are the origins of Taner's longstanding commitment to do what he could to bring about a better Turkey. And I think these experiences have been at the core of what motivates him to take the risk and do the work he's done. Indeed, Taner never worried about the risks, or at least never let on that he was worried. Instead, he focused on his purpose and the impact he could make. The specifics of that path only became clear as life unfolded, from his becoming a student in Hanover, Germany, completing his Ph.D., and beginning his study of the Armenian Genocide.

I didn't know Tanner then, but I learned much of his history after he came to the United States, stayed with us, and we had a chance to ask a lot of questions. Let me take you back to the late 1990s. Some of you may remember an extraordinary documentary film entitled the Wall of Silence. This film was made by a Dutch filmmaker and depicted the story of the first meeting between Taner Akcam and Vahakn Dadrian, another extraordinary scholar of the Armenian Genocide. Some of you may remember seeing this film and its portrayal of their shared interests and their surprising recognition of their common purpose. The tone was very natural and the exchange developed into a deep friendship of mutual admiration as these two exceptional scholars shared libraries and books and ideas (and both of them had extraordinary libraries!) And then one day, my husband Dr. Dennis Papazian, who was then director of the Armenian Research Center he had founded at the University of Michigan, Dear-
Turkey can become democratic and become its best self is if it faces its history, if it faces its psychological taboos that currently inhibit its healthy growth. He listed five of these taboos, and truthfully, I can’t remember the other four. But the first one he articulated, the most powerful, is the Turkish denial of the Armenian Genocide. He also said that until Turkey is able to acknowledge the reality of the Armenian Genocide, it will never be free to be an open society because it will always have something to hide. At the core of the emergence of the modern Republic of Turkey in 1921, which occurred on the heels of the genocide and the theft of so much Armenian wealth, the founding of the new Turkish Republic ironically represents a dark stain on Turkish history. Until Turkey faces this reality and the consequences that stem from these actions, Turkey will never be able to be democratic. Taner continued, “My commitment to bring these events to light and understand them will allow Turkey to become a more open, democratic society, if it is able to face this psychological burden.”

And so, when Taner came to Detroit, we spent time together learning reflecting on our shared history as we came to know this modern-day Sherlock Holmes. And it was Sherlock Holmes style sleuthing that Taner employed as he searched out the details of the Armenian Genocide. I remember Taner talking about how he would have numerous unnamed scholars go into the archives in different ways, at different times, to ask for seemingly random documents. The key was that you couldn’t have the same person ask for related documents or for too many of similar kind of documents because then the authorities would figure out what they were trying to do. Instead, Taner had a diverse group of people asking for different documents in randomized ways. Only later were these documents brought together so that Taner could then see the whole picture. This was the only way to prevent the authorities from shutting down his inquiry. This may sound simple, but in fact it was a very difficult thing to do and it took a lot of courage.

Another one of Taner’s great achievements was his work pulling together all of the documents related to the war crimes trials the Turks held following the Armenian Genocide. These documents had been published at the time, but many had disappeared or been destroyed. Again, drawing on a team of scholars, Taner pulled these documents together and published them both in English and in Turkish, so they could be made available in Turkey. As part of this story and before Taner’s volume was published, I’ll always remember how Dennis, at the Armenian Research Center, put together Xerox copies of the war crimes trials documents that Taner had collected and made them available to scholars for $250. His first customer was Dr. Stanford Shaw, then living in Istanbul, but who for many years had been a professor of Ottoman and Turkish history at UCLA. He was well-known as a strong denier of the Armenian Genocide. So it is ironic that he was the first owner of Taner’s work in Turkey. Soon after, Taner’s publication of the war crimes trial documents came out in multiple languages and has had extraordinary impact ever since.

Now other scholars tonight already have spoken about other books written by Taner, many of which you can find on the table at the entrance to the hall. Let me just say this just as an aside, that when I leave tonight I hope I don’t see a book on that table. If you support Taner’s work, you will buy a book. If you already have a copy, then buy one for your friends, buy them for your children, but buy them, because scholars live in part on their work and it’s important to support them.

We are seeing Taner’s prophetic words play out in real time. In the moments when Turkey has been a more open society, it has come closer to recognition. But when it has fallen back, as it now seems to be doing, Turkey has become more closed and repressive. There was a time some years where it was where it looked like we were moving in the right direction. All across Turkey, you might remember, Turks were discovering their Armenian origins and their Armenian grandmothers. This was a hopeful and profound moment that might have led to a positive outcome. But again, the choices that were made turned it from a path of possibility to a path that we can all say today is something of darkness.

During this time, Taner’s career as a scholar in the United States developed. As I said there were moments when there was a chance Taner would go back and visit Turkey, and we would worry every time he went. We all know where we were, for example, when Taner’s close friend Hrant Dink was assassinated. In fact, Taner — continued on page 10
and Hrant had been together not much before Hrant Dink was assassinated, and so we worried a great deal. Taner, it’s as if an angel is smiling on you and keeping you safe, knowing that you have great work to do. And so, your career moved from the University of Michigan Dearborn to the University of Michigan and then on to Minnesota, where another wonderful man, a scholar who headed the Institute for Holocaust and Genocide Studies at the University of Minnesota, the late Stephen Feinstein, brought Taner to Minnesota so that he could continue his work here in the United States. By then Taner’s English was much better than when he came in 2000, when in truth he didn’t speak much English. I’ll never forget how Taner’s daughter Helene visited us knowing very little English, and yet, she and our daughter Ani, who didn’t share a language in common, were able to communicate like only children can do! So its great to see you here this evening, Helene!

From the University of Minnesota, Taner headed to Clark University, in Worcester, MA, where he remains on the faculty today. While at Clark, Taner has continued his extraordinary work, becoming one of the most well-known and important scholars on the Armenian Genocide throughout the world. Books like A Shameful Act and Killing Orders take not only scholarly commitment and precision, but also a great deal of courage. And this makes Taner inspirational. But the wonderful thing about Taner, as I’ve said before, is that it was never about him. It was never about the accolades or the attention, such as we are bestowing on him this evening. For Taner truly is a humble man who is doing this work because he sees it as the right work to do. Taner believes, as do we all, that the story of the Armenian Genocide has to be told, both because it is a way to honor so many who suffered deeply, but also because truth still is the foundation for building a just and honest society. And so, while it is our obligation as a community to say thank you, we should recognize that Taner is not seeking accolades for himself. Instead, he is committed to building ongoing support so that he can continue to develop the next generation of scholars prepared to do this important work.

As we look into the future and imagine Taner’s legacy, it will be both in the next generation of talented scholars that he is preparing and in the hope that people will continue to believe that the truth is possible and will somehow emerge. Very few in this room could have predicted that the Soviet Union would fall in the way it did, and very few of us growing up expected that there would be a free and independent Republic of Armenia, however much we may have yearned for it. When we pause to reflect on the work that Taner is doing on the Armenian Genocide and the impact that work might have on current Republic of Armenia, we recognize that our reflections take place in the glow of the recent Velvet Revolution, an extraordinary peaceful expression of a people’s yearning for democracy. At the same time, we know that its future is still very much in doubt despite the extraordinary energy and intelligence and passion of this independence generation, for Armenia today suffers from a closed border with Turkey and is still in a hot peace with Azerbaijan. And what’s the common link between these realities? The failure of the Turks and Azeris to recognize the Armenian Genocide.

When Turkey can find a place to acknowledge our shared and painful history, perhaps educated and inspired by the work of scholars such as Taner Akcam, it will no longer fear the Republic of Armenia or their citizens coming down from Yerevan to Van to see their old homes, to perhaps buy a farm, or to do what they can to be part of Western Armenia. So in a larger context, Taner’s work could lead one day to recognition and to understanding and to peace. There’s an old phrase that we sometimes hear in this country, a favorite phrase often used by Dr. Martin Luther King Jr. Dr. King said, “The arc of history is long, but it bends toward justice.” I believe we have to still believe that, that it bends toward justice. But we also need to understand that it doesn’t bend on its own, it bends because there are great men and women, courageous people like Taner Akcam, who are willing to put their sweat, their intellectual power, their courage, and risk their own lives, to force that bending and to say yes, the truth will out, whatever you think because it is right, because it is just, and because it speaks to all of us.

So Taner, thank you for all you’ve done. Thank you for your courage, your dedication, your commitment, and your friendship. You are an extraordinary person. And who knows, maybe one day you will win the Nobel Prize!

Thank you.
Dr. Taner Akcam Remarks from His Lifetime Achievements Award Event

Allow me to begin by simply saying “Thank you.” I am grateful for the efforts of those who organized this meaningful event and I am humbled by your presence here tonight. Above all, I would like to give a special expression of gratitude to Hrant Gülian, who persevered for months—and despite his own health problems—to put this evening together. Hrant Abi, I say this from the depths of my being that the work you’ve done here is worthy of our greatest respect and admiration.

Two days ago, it was my birthday, I cannot image a better birthday than this…

This evening marks an important milestone for me personally, of course, but while I may be the one standing here before, I recognize that my accomplishments are but one part of a much broader effort, one to which many scholars have contributed. Moreover, as a historian, my work is nothing out of the ordinary. The tools of our trade are the documents that historians use to reveal the past. In a sense, we are their servants. We utilize these materials to produce our “goods”, and mine are not so very different from those of other historians.

So, in that case, what am I doing here? Ironically, tonight’s celebration of my work is a byproduct of the Turkish State’s persistent policy of genocide denial. This evening is like an indirect gift to me—to us—from the Turkish regime. In the face of Turkey’s long-standing and increasingly ridiculous denialist policies, an act as mundane as simply telling the truth becomes exalted to the level of public recognition and prize-worthiness!

But there is another reason I am here. I have been called “courageous” for my research on the Armenian Genocide—at least some have referred to me as “a courageous Turk”. But what’s important here is not any personal courage I may or may not display; rather, it is the roaring silence of both the Turkish people and Turkish academia. It is this silence, this fear of even broaching the subject that elevates the simple act of “truth telling” to an unparalleled “act of courage.” I’ve never thought of my work as demanding a great deal of courage. If I am courageous, it is only in contrast to others’ silence. I long for the day when I am no longer the “courageous Turk”; when truth telling is nothing out of the ordinary, and when everyone behaves in such a manner.

I am still obliged to answer the question of why I do what I do. The simple answer is because of MY FATHER. I only wish he were with us tonight to hear my remarks. The son of a poor Eastern Anatolian peasants, his lesson to me was simple: if you see injustice, don’t ignore it, thinking that someone else will do something; Step up and be the first one to speak out.” Without a doubt, I am my father’s son. When I first began to protest against injustice already during my university days, my father’s voice was in my ear. He always supported my efforts to the full. When I started to struggle with the Armenian genocide he was my biggest supporter. For him, more important than what I said was the question of whether I was willing to stand behind what I wrote. “If you’re not willing to pay the price for what you’ve written,” he would say, “then don’t write it.” I miss him and his moral clarity greatly.

But, as I mentioned, I am indeed my father’s son, and I certainly paid a price over the years for my words and actions. When I was a student activist, fighting for social justice and for the rights of the Kurds I was arrested five times. I experienced torture and all manner of mistreatment; I’ll never forget being knocked out cold by military prison guard’s punch. I still have a large lump on my head: a “souvenir” from the baton of an officer at the same prison. When I began to research the Armenian genocide, I received death threats, I was subjected to physical attacks at gatherings and conferences in America, and for years I was forced to deliver my lectures under police guard. But these suffering and hardship were perhaps the inevitable price for “standing up” for my beliefs, as my father taught me to do.

To be continued in the next issue.
On December 1, 2019, Ani Otyag and Etchmiadzin Lodge held their Annual Christmas Celebration which was held at the beautifully decorated Laterna Greek Restaurant in Bayside, New York. The event started with a blessing from Asbed Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan followed by a warm welcome by Dirouhie Marian Minassian and Sbarabed Bruce Ashbahian. We were honored to have among us Aznevapile NAD Sona Manuelian and NS Leo Manuelian, Nakhgin Avak Garkabedoouhie Lily Sarkissian and Nakhgin Avak Kandzabedoouhie Ani Minnetyan. Also present were both Mid Atlantic Grand District Representatives: ND Seta Izmirliyan and NS Dr. Edward Sanossian. Sahaganoush Otyag Dirouhie Analis Tavitian, Anahid Otyag Dirouhie Antica Black and Bakradouny Lodge Sbarabed Peter Bonjuklian also attended the event. Our wonderful Tivan members, Naghkin Dirouhies and Sbarabeds were also present at this festive holiday event with their families and friends. The day was full of joyful surprises! While enjoying delicious Greek appetizers, guests enjoyed wonderful Christmas music by DJ George Minassian followed by a very special Musical Performance by the very talented Concertmaster Violinist Arsen Ketikyan. GDR ND Seta Izmirliyan then delivered AD Alice Kalustian's uplifting holiday message and the special congratulatory note for ND Seta's 20-year Anniversary in the Sisterhood. During the luncheon, Dirouhie Marian Minassian recognized the following Ani Otyag Sisters for their Service Anniversaries in Ani Otyag and congratulated them for their years of service to the Sisterhood.

ND Stella Kapikian - 50 Years – Who was unable to attend the event
ND Seta Izmirliyan - 20 years
Sister Anahid Markarian - 20 Years
Sister Siran Kilicyan - 20 Years
Sister Ani Cinozoglu - 10 years
ND Sylvia Sanossian presented the Anniversary Pins to the recipients, embraced them and congratulated them on their dedication to the Sisterhood and Organization.

Special thanks to Asbed Brother Karnik Minassian for amusing the guests with his Special Appearance as the ‘Grinch’ followed by Santa. He truly brought the Holiday Spirit to the event and entertained the children and adults. The guests also enjoyed a wonderful singalong of Christmas Songs together. GDR NS Dr. Edward Sanossian then made his special holiday remarks filled with encouraging words for the upcoming year and a bright future for our Organization. Special thanks to GDR Seta Izmirliyan for making the beautiful centerpieces, many thanks to the Kasarjian family for donating the beautiful Christmas Flowers as centerpieces and sincere thanks and appreciation to all the Tivan members and the raffle gift donations, their help and support for making this event possible.

On behalf of Ani Otyag and Etchmiadzin Lodge, I would like to wish you all a very Happy Holiday Season, Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

With NAD Sona Manuelian, NS Leo Manuelian, GDR ND Seta Izmirliyan, GDR NS Dr. Edward Sanossian, Sbarabed Bruce Ashbahian & Sahaganoush Otyag Dirouhie Analis Tavitian.

Ani Otyag Service Anniversary Recipients: From left to right (Sister Anahid Markarian, Sister Siran Kilicyan, GDR ND Seta Izmirliyan, Dirouhie Marian Minassian, ND Sylvia Sanossian & Sister Ani Cinozoglu).
Sahaganoush Otyag Library Project

By Annie Chakhutian

"Over the past number of months, North Jersey communities have had the opportunity to indulge in the rich history of the Armenian people through various exhibits and displays that have been prepared across a number of township libraries and educational institutes. These displays have provided a glimpse into the Armenian culture, religion, history, and values as the Daughters of Vartan - Sahaganoush Chapter has included several pieces of literature and mementos that captivate the multiple dimensions of the Armenian people. Public libraries throughout Northern New Jersey and Bergen Community College alike have been very receptive and have allowed us to share our history with the general public and we are very grateful to them for providing us with this opportunity. The feedback has been fabulous. We are proud to say we were invited back for a repeat display from one of our libraries. Our traveling exhibit will continue through the end of 2019. One of our future goals is to provide a live presentation to the public as this was a request from a few libraries.

Bakradouny Lodge and Sahaganoush Otyag Charity Dinner&Dance

By Dirouhie Anayis Tavitian

The Knights of Vartan Bakradouny Lodge and the Daughters of Vartan Sahaganoush Otyag hosted a gala event, their annual charity dinner dance, on Sunday October 6, 2019. The event took place at the world renowned Tuxedo Club, nestled among the majestic Ramapo Mountains and overlooking glacially formed Tuxedo Lake in the private, gated community of Tuxedo Park, New York. Tuxedo Park was founded in the 1800’s by Peter Lorillard, heir to the Lorillard tobacco fortune. It later became an exclusive enclave for gilded age High Society including JP Morgan, the Astor family, the Vanderbilt’s, and Emily Post, whose father was the inaugural architect of the Club.

Guests were serenaded during the cocktail hour on the Club’s beautiful stone terrace overlooking Tuxedo Lake by accomplished violinist Lisa Dodakian. Lisa and her guitar accompanist, Rich Berta, also performed several intriguing musical selections during the dinner hour.

The renowned Johnny Berberian Ensemble provided Armenian music for the dancing and listening pleasure of the many attendees. A 50/50 raffle was held with a portion of the winnings donated back to the organization by the gracious winners.

The very successful event was co-chaired by Sbarabed Peter Bonjuklian and Dirouhie Anayis Tavitian.

Committee members: NS Sargis Sargsyan; B.Ted Takvorian; NS Leo Manuelian; ND Nancy Burdman; Sb. Peter Bonjuklian; Dir. Anayis Tavitian; S. Ann Takvorian; ND Lily Sarkissian and NAD Sona Manuelian.
Activities from Ani Lodge

Veratarts Hayrenik IV Trip Participants Tell All

Knights of Vartan Forth Veratarts Hayrenik Trip participants of Ani Lodge and Dikranouhi Otyag described their participation in September as “historical” during October 8 presentation to the members.

NS and SEGDR Jake Bournazian, NS Ara Avedisian and Asbed Varoujan Kalikian talked about their unique experiences by participating with other brothers and sisters in trip programs. Their heartwarming meetings with school teachers, students of public schools, children of kindergarten, visit to Gyumri city and parliament of the Republic of Armenia were all had historical effect in their lives. Separately, visiting and handing of new military boots to the Army School students has been the culmination of their visit and they are looking for the fifth visit next September.

Left to right NS Ara Avedisian, NS Jake Bournazian and Asbed Varoujan Kalikian.

Photo by NS Greg Manoukian.

Ani Lodge Members Participants in Home-building with the Fuller Center Armenia

On November 12, new members of Ani Lodge, brothers Vlad and Kirk Kalians scheduled to present their participation to the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia’s (FCHA) Global Builders trip in Armenia last June, which was organized and led by NAD Sona and NS Leo Manuelian of New Jersey.

Vlad described to our members the essence of working with young people from all over the world to build a simple home for a family of five, with two simple bedrooms in village not too far from Yerevan. Vlad told the audience that despite non of volunteers were builders, just young Armenians have come to help Armenia, a livable house was completed and given to the new owners as bare walls to be completed by themselves. Vlad concluded that the Fuller Center in Armenia is doing fantastic job in Armenia.

NS Nishan Dulgerian Visits Washington

During the Thanksgiving week, we had the pleasure of hosting former Sbarabed of Ani Lodge from 1991-1993 NS Nishan Dulgerian, now member of Vahan Tahlilj, Orange County, California. Participants were GDR Jake Bournazian, GDR Margie Satian, sister Varti Marashlian, sister Eva Shafakian and Sbarabed Kevork Marashlian.

NS Dulgerian praised Ani Lodge and Dikranouhie Otyag for their participation in a big number to the 4th Veratarts Hayrenik trip to Armenia this year, and the donation of military boots and sportswear to the students of the military school.
Christmas Bazaar organized by Dikranouhie Otyag

Dikranouhie Otyag Dirouhie Malvina Brown and her team organized the second annual Christmas Bazaar at St. Mary Armenian Church Hall on Saturday, November 23.

26 vendors from members and non-members, including the Women’s Guild of the church bought tables for $40 dollars each and demonstrated and sold goodies, artis- anal works, paintings and Christmas decoration to hundreds of Armenian and non-Armenian visitors.

The hall was decorated tastefully and accordingly by sister Ani Armani. Visitors had a chance of tasting Armenian delicatessens, buy lahmajun and Marash soup and get acquainted with Armenian history and culture. The event brought in a profit of $2,000 for the Daughters.

District of Columbia Council Passes Armenian Genocide Resolution

Following the historic and overwhelming bipartisan passage of the Armenian Genocide resolution in the U.S. House of Representatives, the District of Columbia Council approved a resolution affirming the Armenian Genocide.

NS Jake Bournazian spent a lot of time and resources over the past 15 months lobbying the District of Columbia Council, testifying at hearings last February and even drafted the resolution in May. He was very upset lately not seeing any progress, but things came together on November 17, 2019.

The resolution is “to recognize and reflect on the 104th anniversary of the 1915 Armenian Genocide and on the importance of educating District of Columbia residents on the Armenian Genocide.”

Christmas Party at Avedisians Residence

For the second year in a row, NS Ara and sister Maggie Avedisians hosted Knights and Daughters of Vartan Christmas Party in their beautiful home in December.

The Parish Council of St. Mary Church honored us with presence of Arthur Sivaslian and his wife Beverly, who were guests representing the Parish Council of St. Mary Church.

The party was wonderful with delicious food and desserts, organized by sister Takuhi Hallajian and prepared by sisters. Christmas songs were sung, accompanied by sister Nayira Babayan, played a NEW game called “Ara and Maggie”, prepared and conducted by Dirouhie Malvina Brown, and drew a raffle with expensive prizes worth of $300-600. Members also donated unwrapped toys for Mary’s Center, a medical establishment for immigrants in Washington DC.

The following is a collage of Christmas party photos, courtesy of NS Greg Manougian, and toys being donated to the representative of Mary’s Center in Washington, DC.
Knights of Vartan

2018 - 2019

School and Kindergarten
Building and Supplies

2,412+ people, $93,262
Which was leveraged to over $938,500 through different organizations.

Genocide Research and Recognition

Over $43,731
Including Times Square annual event, FAS, maintaining Armenian Genocide Memorials.

Education in the USA and in Armenia

353 people, $69,350
Including AUA, YSU, NPJA, Vocational Schools, Engineering labs and more.

Low Income Housing

23 people, $28,500
With the Fuller Center for Housing Armenia.

Other Charities

$70,587 +
Other projects implemented by lodges and members in the USA and in Armenia.

Medical Equipment for Hospitals in Armenia

over 15,391 people
$126,300
Gift in kind.

Visit us at kofv.org
Sargis Baldaryan, Ph.D. student at Armenian History Chair, Yerevan State University, travel grant request to visit Bodleian Library to access manuscripts for preparation of critical text of trade manuals of Constant of Julfa (17th century). Description of project: Armenian merchants from New Julfa, Isfahan presided over one of the most successful and vast trade networks of the early modern period. Young Julfan Armenians had an excellent opportunity to begin their commercial career after a special education provided by a trade school in New Julfa. This school was located in the compound of the All Savior’s Monastery and was managed by a famous Julfan schoolmaster, named Constant who used his own manuals for educational purposes. Constant’s manuals were not only used as textbooks in the commercial school but also were carried by Armenian merchants during their business trips as valuable guidebooks. Despite being invaluable guidebooks for Julfan Armenian merchants, Constant’s trade manuals have never been published. I am in the process of preparing critical texts of trade manuals of Constant of Julfa. The publication of Armenian commercial handbooks will include a detailed introduction, critical texts of Constant’s manuals, annotations and glossary dealing with hard-to-understand words and phrases from New Julfan commercial dialect.

Dr. Danny Fittante, visiting scholar, Center for Advanced Studies in Sofia (CAS), grant request to support fieldwork for research project “Armenian Mobilization/Intermediation in Contemporary Romania.” Description of project: To date, I have conducted fieldwork and published findings of Armenian mobilization in the United States, Argentina, Australia, Armenia, and Bulgaria. These research projects will culminate in a book-length manuscript, which unpacks Armenian mobilization and intermediation among small yet prosperous ethniasporas. The scholarship elaborates on the theoretical framework of “ethnic intermediation,” through multi-cited ethnographic research. Because the small yet visible Armenian community of Romania has achieved many political accomplishments (for example, the Romanian state allocates approximately one million US dollars to Armenian organizations each year), I would like one chapter to relate to this community. In particular, I will likely focus on the intermediation of former Romania’s Minister of Economy and current member of the Chamber of Deputies, Varujan Vosganian. I have already been in touch with Mr. Vosganian; he has agreed to work with me on this project. In addition to a case study of Mr. Vosganian, I will undertake extensive research of the Romanian Armenian communities – interviewing over 30 prominent officials, traveling to important sites of Armenian habitation, and working closely with members of the Armenian Romanian communities. While each chapter in the forthcoming volume will highlight a general region of the world, the Romanian fieldwork will contribute on Armenian intermediation in contemporary Central East Europe. The findings of this research will feature as a stand-alone academic article as well as a book chapter in the aforementioned volume.

Dr. Sergio LaPorta, Haig and Isabel Berberian Chair of Armenian Studies, CSU Fresno, and Dr. Allison Vacca, Associate Professor of History, University of Tennessee, Knoxville, publication grant to support inclusion of maps in forthcoming new English translation and edition with an introduction and commentary of the Historical Discourse (Patmabanut’iwn) of Ėlewond, to be published by the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago. Total amount requested: $6,000 for 16 custom-designed maps. Description of project: Dr. Alison Vacca of the University of Tennessee, Knoxville, and I are currently completing a new English translation and edition with an introduction and commentary of the Historical Discourse (Patmabanut’iwn) of Ėlewond. This text is the only contemporary eighth-century history of Armenia and as such provides critical information about the Islamic incursions into the Armenian plateau and surrounding areas that are either ignored or lightly touched upon by Arabic sources. Because it is intended primarily for use in the classroom, we have also sought to furnish a wealth of supporting material to help students visualize the text. In particular, we agreed that it is absolutely essential for the translation to be accompanied by several accurate maps so that students will be able to situate the events described and become familiar with the region. We have identified sixteen moments in the text for which we think a detailed map would be critical.
Appreciation Letter from The HALO Trust

October 22, 2019

Steven R Adams
Knights of Vartan
1537 N Dartmouth Avenue
Clovis, CA 93619

Dear Steven,

On behalf of everyone at The HALO Trust, from our Trustees to our deminers working every day to make their own communities safe, thank you for the generous gift of $10,000 from the Knights of Vartan to support The HALO Trust’s life-saving work in Nagorno Karabakh.

This investment will be matched by an anonymous foundation and go twice as far to protect families and clear landmines in Karabakh. With each minefield cleared, families are able to move beyond conflict and focus on rebuilding their lives and communities without fear. We are deeply appreciative of the support of the Knights of Vartan toward our mission.

The benefits of mine clearance are tangible, and the cleared land can be used safely in perpetuity. Last year alone, HALO located and destroyed 126 landmines, 30 cluster bombs, and 168 other explosive remnants of war—protecting over 7,000 Armenians. Mine clearance in Karabakh has not only greatly decreased the casualty rate, but it has also allowed roads, schools, and housing to be built, water pipes to be laid, fields to be cultivated, livestock to be safely grazed, and people to go about their daily business without fear.

We would welcome the opportunity to host the Knights of Vartan at our program in Nagorno Karabakh to see our impact first-hand. You can contact me at chris.whatley@halousa.org or 202.331.1266 at your convenience.

Thank you again for being our partner toward a safer, mine-free Karabakh.

In gratitude,

Christ Whatley
Executive Director

I can’t thank you enough for your leadership.
Meal for Disadvantaged Families

For two years NAS Nigoghos Atinizian has been sponsoring a turkey project in Tavush border region. In the spring 100 little turkeys are purchased and sent to the town of Berd where farmers raise them during the year. Each turkey grows to 10-15 kg. The coordination in Berd is assisted by KV longtime partner Fr. Aram Mirzoyan.

Every year during Thanksgiving the turkeys are purchased and provided to KV partner Fund For Armenian Relief (FAR) soup kitchen in Berd. This year in addition to the Berd soup kitchen, 3 more FAR soup kitchens and Prkutyun NGO of mentally disabled young adults received turkey meat for hot meals. This meal combined with hot soup, fresh salad or pilaf, freshly baked bread very often is the only meal for the beneficiary families. FAR beneficiary families also take portions of meals back home to share with those who stayed behind or are bedridden. Prkutyun NGO stored some meat to cook later as well. The NGO’s main challenge is to provide meals for their beneficiaries every day.

On December 11, NAS Nigoghos Atinizian with his guests visited the FAR soup kitchen, met with FAR beneficiaries and shared turkey meals with everyone. Blessings were shared from all sides. Despite the hard life, people were appreciative and happy to meet with the donor and extend their thanks and blessings. The need is high and maybe we can’t solve every problem but trying a bit from all sides can make life a little better. The aim of the project is to increase income sources for villages near the border regions, provide meals for the poor, embrace the message of Thanksgiving with a healthy meal.
John Poochigian (1948-2020)

NS John George Poochigian was a member of the Knights of Vartan organization and a dedicated philanthropist whose zest for life benefited many causes and persons in the United States and in Armenia.

John’s untimely passing has been and will continue to be a difficult reality to admit by many of us. We find consolation in the fact that he lived a full life and cherished the benevolence his philanthropic activities brought joy and contentment to needy individuals, families in destitute, and numerous deserving students.

John George Poochigian was born in Los Angeles, California, to John George and Ellen Poochigian (nee Keshishian.) He studied pharmacy at University of Southern California’s school of Pharmacy where he received his Doctor of Pharmacy degree. He later attended University of California-Irvine Medical School where he received his Doctor of Medicine degree.

After completing his residency in internal medicine at the University of Wisconsin, John worked for Permanente Medical Group in Mountain View, California for 32 years in the Department of Internal Medicine, where he was beloved by patients and staff alike. He later joined the Kaiser Permanente Mental Health Center in Los Angeles as a consulting physician where he worked until his recent retirement.

John met his wife, Dr. Christine Avakoff, during their medical internship. John and Christine were married for 42 years, together they traveled to more than 58 countries and shared their passion for philanthropy, volunteer work, and the arts.

John was a long-time member of the Knights of Vartan organization. He was named Asbed of the Year in 2001 by his then home lodge, Daron Tahlij, in San Francisco where in 2011 he chaired the 93rd Avak Convocation Committee. He was a founding member of the Face of Angel nonprofit organization which provides free-of-charge laser services in Armenia for patients who are mired with birth defects.

John also served on numerous charitable organizations, including the Cosmic Ray Division of Yerevan’s Alikhanyan Physics Institute. Among many of the charitable projects he was connected to in Armenia, a recent source of pride was his donation of a large bus that enables university students of the city of Aparan, located north of Yerevan, to commute to numerous universities of the capital city.

John’s joyful nature, keen mind and gentle spirit will be missed by his brothers in the Knights of Vartan organization, by the numerous friends he had, and by colleagues in the medical field.

Members of his home lodge since 2014, Vahan Tahlij, Orange County, where he served as Commander for three years, express their heartfelt sympathies to John’s widow Christine, to his mother Ellen, brother Mark, his nephews Daniel Poochigian and Edward Albert Avakoff, numerous cousins and friends, and numerous friends and acquaintances who enjoyed his friendship over the years.

Rest in peace dear Brother John. Your memory will live in our hearts and minds.

Ronald Keoleian (1947 - 2019)

Ronald Charles Keoleian, age 72. Beloved husband of Adrian. Loving father of Ronald Adam (Sarah) and Jordan Charles (Colleen). Cherished grandfather of Adam, Charles, and Norah. Dear brother of the late Asbed Harry (Mary) Keoleian and the late Asbed Souren (Virginia) Keoleian and their families and brother in law of Adam (Isabelle) Kazarian and Sandra Boyagian and their families. Godfather of Shant and Jordan Norsigian and Armen Boyagian.

Ron was a 35-year member of the Knights of Vartan, 12 years with Nareg #32 and 23 years with Nareg-Shavarshan #6. He and his wife owned their own coffee service business and supported many Armenian organizations. Ron will be missed by his many friends in the Knights, as well as, family and other friends.
Vahakn Aglamishian
(1946 - 2019)

Vahakn N. Aglamishian was born on October 10, 1946, in Bucharest, Romania. His parents were Lusig and Nurhan Aglamishian. He had one brother, NS Sarkis Aglamishian. Vahakn immigrated to the United States in 1964 with his mother, father, grandmother (Anush) and brother.

They originally settled in Walled Lake with the Bagdasaryan family, and with their help they were able to finally buy a home in Detroit by 1965. Both Sarkis and Vahakn went to Wayne State University to pursue engineering degrees. Vahakn learned English while pursuing his degree and worked full time as a draftsman.

Vahakn was successful at school and was able to attain two master’s degrees. One in engineering and one in accounting. He started his career at General Motors but was quickly recruited by Ford because of his knowledge of the Romanian language and education. He remained at Ford Motor Company until he later retired.

Vahakn was proud of his Armenian Heritage and his religion. He was a long-standing member of the Knights of Vartan and served on the board for two years (1982-1984).

He was a loving Brother, Uncle, Godfather, Cousin and Friend to many. He will be missed dearly.

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Paul Bazigian
(1934 - 2019)

Paul Bazigian passed away peacefully surrounded by his loving family on October 18, 2019 at the age of 84. Beloved husband for 62 years of Ani K. Bazigian; loving father of Craig Bazigian (Susie) and Lesley B. Kissick (Charles); doting grandfather of Ani, Lauren, Leah, and Holly.

Paul attended Clark University in Worcester, Mass; Served in the US Army during the Korean War. He founded a successful business with his son 30 years ago after working for a large company in New England and the Midwest 25 years prior.

Paul was an active member of the Armenian community and attended St. John Armenian Church in San Francisco.

He enjoyed golf, road trips, poker, BBQ’s with family and friends, and had a special talent for making friends everywhere he went, but his greatest joy was spending time with his four granddaughters.
Mihran Hoplamazian (1921-2019)

Mihran Hoplamazian was born October 1, 1921 at home, in Detroit, Michigan, to Garabed and Yerchanig Hoplamazian, survivors of the Armenian Genocide. He grew up during the Great Depression, living in a fourplex with his extended family in a house full of children and love.

Mihran was one of the remarkable proud Armenians that came to be known as the Greatest Generation. He and his brother were determined to enlist in defense of their country during World War II, before they could be drafted. Their own immigrant father encouraged this as his own gift to the country that gave him life and liberty. Mihran returned to civilian life as a Second Lieutenant and remained honored to have been allowed to serve his country the rest of his life.

After having attended Highland Park Community College, Mihran became self-employed in the historic Eastern Market District of Detroit. He pursued a career in the butcher supply and casing business, a trade he learned from his uncle, in New York City.

He remained actively employed, serving his customers until the very day of his passing. In all his years of business, his handshake was his contract. His ever-present business pursuits in the Eastern Market District earned him the affectionate title of ‘governor of the market.’ He was not only a daily business fixture but was a lifelong customer of the Saturday open market, having, as a young boy, held the hand of his own father while doing their Saturday morning shopping.

Mihran’s life was punctuated by service and loyalty. His faith, his family and his beloved country were his mission. Mihran served at the altar of St. John Armenian Church, first as an altar boy from the age of 8, and then as an ordained deacon, officiating at the weddings and baptisms in his family. His altar service spanned 90 years.

Mihran was devoted not only to his faith but to his American Armenian community. He was a founding member of the AGBU Special Projects Committee that helped to fund the Alex Manoogian School in Southfield and had just recently attended the 50th anniversary celebration of the school. He served on the school board longer than any other member including as its Chairman. He then watched his own grandchildren and great grandchildren attend the school. He served many times on the Parish Council of St. John. He was an active member of the Knights of Vartan, including Shavarshan #6, Nareg #32 and Nareg-Shavarshan #6 and tried never to miss an annual convocation. Mihran was a member of the Knights of Vartan for more than 72-years. He was honored for his life of service to his church by the Supreme leader of the Armenian Apostolic Church with the coveted St. Gregory The Illuminator Medal.

A gentleman in the truest sense of the word, he will be truly missed by everyone who’s life he touched.

NS Arthur Kashian (1923-2019)

NS Arthur Kashian of Milwaukee, Wisconsin passed away on October 12, 2019 at 96 years of age.

NS Arthur was born on February 21, 1923 to Areknaz and Toros Kashian in South Milwaukee, Wisconsin. He was the second born of five siblings. Being born from immigrant parents who were forced to flee their homeland of Armenia during the Armenian Genocide of 1915, NS Arthur innately had a strong sense of love and appreciation for his family, his faith, his heritage, and life itself.

NS Arthur grew up during the Great Depression when times were hard. Due to these challenging times, the Kashian family moved to Marseilles, France where they lived from 1930-1935. While in France, NS Arthur gravitated towards opportunities to educate himself, excelling in school, and learning to speak, read, and write in several different languages.

Eventually, the family ended up moving back to Milwaukee, Wisconsin after the depression. NS Arthur graduated from Juneau High School in 1941, and shortly after, served in the Army Air Corps from 1943-1946 in World War II as a flight engineer. He took immense pride that he was able to serve his country. In 2013, he had the opportunity to go to Washington D.C. on the Wisconsin Honor Flight for Veterans. The trip was very special to him and his family. On his trip, he was, at age 90, one of the only ambulatory veterans, and, proudly, wore his Armenia hat during the whole trip.
After returning from the service in 1946, he and three others established Milwaukee Tile and Supply, the business where he served as President for 42 years until his retirement.

He was an active and proud member of the Knights of Vartan for 64 years serving as Sbarabed of Giligia Lodge #24, Milwaukee prior to its closure in 2012. He then transferred his membership to Avarayr Lodge #4, Chicago for the past nine years. Knowing being an Armenian was something to be valued, he was instrumental in providing leadership to the Giligia Lodge, humbly keeping the Lodge focused on the greater objective…to perpetuate our Armenian heritage. NS Arthur, along with NS Sam Avakian, were pillars of Giligia Lodge for many years.

NS Arthur was also a very active member of St. John the Baptist Armenian Church throughout his life. He served in almost every capacity, including Chairman of the Building Committee, in which he was instrumental in the construction of the church that stands in today. For over half a century, he served as a member of the Parish Council and periodically as its Chairman.

Additionally, NS Arthur was a pioneer in the establishment of the Midwest Hye Camp, an Armenian Christian camp that helps children become more familiar with their faith and culture while allowing them to have fun and perpetuate friendships. He volunteered in every way he could in order to help make a positive impact within his church, diocese, and the Armenian community. With all his years of dedication to the church, in 2003 he was awarded the Soorp Nerses Shnorhali medal of high honor of the Armenian Apostolic Church from His Holiness Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians.

Despite all of these remarkable achievements, his greatest accomplishment in life was the family he created with his beautiful wife, ND Helen. They met in 1948, at an Armenian AGBU dance in Chicago, Illinois where NS Arthur picked ND Alice’s name from a mixer basket at the event. Needless to say, it was love at first sight.

They got married on November 28, 1948 at St. James’ Armenian Church in Evanston, Illinois. In 2018, they celebrated their 70th wedding anniversary. Seventy years of unconditional love and devotion to each other. Within those 70 years of being together, they had four children, Arthur, Charles, John, and Janice, fourteen grandchildren and two grandchildren.

NS Arthur was a blessing to us in so many ways, as a man with warmth about him, a caring heart, and a selfless individual. His Brothers in Milwaukee and Chicago will truly miss this outstanding Brother and friend. Asdvadz Hokeen Loosavoreh…May God enlighten his spirit.

Portions taken from his eulogy by his granddaughter Nicole Kashian.

Elbert R. Petersian (1921-2020)

Elbert Petersian passed from these earthly bounds on January 7, 2020 at the age of 98 in Fresno, California.

Elbert was a special person. He was loved by his wife Evelyn, as well as his children, grandchildren and great grandchildren. He was a hard-working person. His love and support was always felt by his family. Elbert was a friendly person who would start a conversation with anyone he happened to meet.

Elbert was born on a small family farm in Fresno. He attended Madison Elementary School and graduated from Fresno High School in 1939. After graduating from high school, he attended Fresno State for two years majoring in business. Then he started working in his family’s secondhand store.

In 1942, Elbert was drafted into World War II. He served in Europe and landed on Omaha Beach in Normandy on “D” day. Elbert was a sergeant in the United States Army. He was awarded the purple heart, bronze star, and silver star for his valor. Elbert was always proud of his service to his country. One of our fondest memories was a trip to Washington DC to see the WWII Memorial. One of Elbert’s army buddies Walt, who referred to Elbert as Pete, came to share the experience with us. As you can imagine this trip was priceless. They really were the greatest generation. Upon returning from the army, Elbert purchased the secondhand store from his family.

In May of 1948 Elbert met Evelyn Mamasian. They were married on October 9, 1948. Soon they started a family, having their son Ralph and daughter Susan. In 1959, Elbert began working for Foodland grocery store as a retail clerk. He enjoyed his work and retired after 24 years, in 1983.

Elbert was a member of the Fresno Masonic Lodge, Scottish Rite and the Shriners. He was very active in these organizations. He loved sports. He played golf and was a member of Fig Garden Golf Course. He loved watching golf, football and baseball. Most of his family are San Francisco Giants fans but for some reason Elbert liked the Dodgers.

After retirement Elbert and Evelyn took many wonderful trips with the Shriners. Some of the places they visited were Ireland, France, Italy, Hungary and many states in the U.S.A. On some of the trips they took grandchildren along.

At his passing, Elbert was the most senior member of Yeprad Lodge in age and in the number of years in lodge. He joined the Knights of Vartan in 1950.
Save the Date
Grand Convocation
July 14-19, 2020
Los Angeles, CA

Back to Homeland
September 2020
Yerevan, Armenia

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15 April 2020
Email: KnightsOfVartan@gmail.com