



Armenian Cultural Conservancy NEWSLETTER

Editor's Message

by Mary Mirigian Ekmalian

Welcome to the first issue of the Armenian Cultural Conservancy's quarterly newsletter. ACC has launched and the community has responded positively! The movie nights have been so popular that we need to consider a larger venue.

Kudos to the ad hoc ACC committee for a job well done on our first banquet.

Most California Armenians can trace their roots back to Fresno and the Central Valley. As a result, we have a rich cultural history that needs to be collected, preserved, and shared with the community, as well as for posterity. The ACC, the brainchild of Charles and Midge Barrett of Heritage Fresno, will be modeled after the Armenian Library and Museum of America located in Watertown, Massachusetts. This is a monumental task and can only be done in phases and with the support of the community.

Although we have a temporary office, thanks to the generosity of Heritage Fresno and Linda Hamilton, we are looking into the possibility of locating in or near historic Armenian Town, as well as other appropriate locations for a museum. In conjunction with searching for a permanent location, we will be forming a Board of Directors comprising all areas of expertise from our community.

For current information during the year on ACC activities, please visit the website www.ArmenianCulturalConservancy.org. We invite all Armenian organizations to submit their events to be posted on our on-line community calendar, which is being set up.

If you wish to be taken off our mailing list, please call our office at 559-226-1984. If you would like to receive the newsletter via e-mail, which will help defray our printing and mailing expenses, please e-mail your request to maryekmalian@att.net. If you wish to become a member of ACC, a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, community benefit organization, you can join by visiting the website or using the enclosed envelope.

We wish you a joyous Christmas and New Year and look forward to your participation in this worthy endeavor.



Banquet speakers, from left, Lusine Tanossian, Mike Kilijian, Deborah Adishian-Astone, Midge and Charles Barrett, Dr. Matthew and Allan Jendian

Fresno's ACC Hosts Inaugural Banquet

by Allan Jendian

The Inaugural Banquet of Fresno's Armenian Cultural Conservancy (ACC) was well supported on October 29, 2016, as 130 guests gathered in the historic "Old Administration Building" of Fresno City College (FCC). Preceding dinner, guests and religious leaders enjoyed a lavish mezze table and wine as they shared fellowship.

Clergy of the Armenian Churches of the San Joaquin Valley – the Very Reverend Father Dajad Ashekian, Holy Trinity Armenian Church of Fresno; Father Vartan Kasparian, Sts. Sahag-Mesrob Armenian Church of Reedley; Father Yeghia Hairabedian, St. Gregory Armenian Church of Fowler;

"We need a place where we can grow roots, an institute that will preserve our heritage to benefit our Armenian Community and the broader community."

– Dr. Matthew Ari Jendian

Father Zaven Markosyan, St. Mary Armenian Church of Yetttem; and Father Yessai Bedros, St. Paul Armenian Church of Fresno – together blessed the banquet meal.

Deborah Adishian-Astone, Vice President for Administration and Associate Vice President for Auxiliary

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From left, Frs. Markosyan, Bedros, Hairabedian, Kasparian, Very Rev. Ashekian

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Guests at the Inaugural Banquet.

Banquet

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Services at California State University, Fresno, skillfully served as Mistress of Ceremony. Ms. Adishian-Astone acknowledged guests, committee members, and the keynote speaker.

Lusine Tanossian, Chief of Staff of the Office of the Armenian Consulate in Fresno, shared greetings and support on behalf of Berj K. Apkarian, the Honorary Consul of the Republic of Armenia. Ms. Tanossian spoke for the Honorary Consul, expressing his support of the initiative and urging the general community to unite in furthering the Conservancy's purpose and mission.



Guests had an opportunity to shop and take home an event treasure.

Special recognition was given to Mabelle Selland by Charles Barrett, ACC's co-chair, for her efforts in saving from demolition the "Old Administration Building" of FCC. As a past Director of the Fresno County Historical Society, Mabelle has been a constant advocate for the preservation of Armenian and other ethnic heritage.

Ms. Adishian-Astone in her presentation of Dr. Matthew Ari Jendian, the Chair of the Sociology Department at Fresno State, stated that he was recognized for his leadership and integrity, and as mentor to many students. She stated, "I have been honored to work with 'Dr. J' on many initiatives."

Dr. Jendian delivered an inspirational keynote address to the guests gathered for the launching of the Armenian Cultural Conservancy. He stated, "We need a place where we can grow roots, an institute that will preserve our heritage

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To collect, preserve and interpret the evidence of the Armenian experience in Central California in an enduring institution of learning.



Armenian Cultural Conservancy Logo
The six- and eight-pointed stars have a long history in pre-Christian Armenia and have been adopted in Church architecture and decorative arts. They are thought to have magical powers and are used extensively in astronomy and sacred art. The logo's wheel of eternity signifies life; the eight-pointed star represents the eight architectural pillars of the Armenian Church; the color purple represents the commemoration of the 100th anniversary of the Genocide; the gold color is the richness of the Armenian culture.

Armenian Cultural Conservancy
2930 North West Avenue
Fresno CA 93705-3901
559-226-1984

Why an Armenian Cultural Conservancy?

by Charles Barrett
Co-Chair, Organizing Committee

Why an Armenian Cultural Conservancy? Visualize a suburban home in, say, San Mateo in the year 2047. A fifteen year old girl named Tiffany asks her older brother Travis a question:

"Mom says we are part Armenian! What's an Armenian?"

"Mom! What is an Armenian? I've never heard about Armenians!"

I hope that mom will be ready with this answer: "Next weekend we are going to Fresno to check out the Armenian Cultural Conservancy there. That's the place where people like us find out what it means to be Armenian." (Say "amen" to heritage tourism.)

Everyone interested in Armenian heritage should take time to discover that answer. The Armenian-American experience has been so painful and tragic, yet so heroic and important that we simply cannot allow it to be lost. It cannot be allowed to fade with the passage of time.

The experience of the people of the Armenian diaspora has been much too costly for that! Their pain must be added to the sum total of human experience in every

real, tangible, and lasting way possible. After all, we enrich the future by preserving the past, and this story of survivors who ultimately triumph over genocide and then flourish must never be lost. Not ever! Never forgotten!

Thus the people of Fresno must endow and build an **Armenian Cultural Conservancy**. That is how we deliver this story and culture to the future. We must deliver it to our children's children, and beyond.

This will be a multi-generational place of learning. First, we will preserve our books, papers and diaries in a combination genealogy and research library for academic and popular use. Second, we will leave our art and artifacts as tangible reminders of the life led by our forebears. Finally, we will use the latest multimedia center technology to pass on the elements of folkway, literature, art, history and music. These must not be consigned to the dustbin, but delivered safe to a waiting future.

We will deliver the Armenian experience if, but only if, we do it together. Each has a part to play. That is what it will take to make our past known to those who follow.

Join the Armenian Cultural Conservancy now!

Yes! I want to become a member of the Armenian Cultural Conservancy

- | | | | |
|--|------|---|--------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student membership | \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Founding membership | \$100 |
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**You can help. Become a member.
Spread the word. Host or assist with an event.**

*"For when two of them meet anywhere in the world,
see if they will not create a New Armenia." – William Saroyan, 1936*



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Banquet

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to benefit our Armenian Community and the broader community." Dr. Jendian further stated, "Philanthropy involves the sharing of one's time, talent, and treasure for the benefit of others, and it will take all of us to make a difference in the legacy that will live on for future generations."

Both Dr. Jendian and Ms. Adishian-Astone, native Fresnans and the grandchildren of genocide survivors, agree that the Conservancy will be a valuable receptacle from which young Armenians can learn of their heritage.



EECU: A Corporate Sponsor

The Educational Employees Credit Union was the major corporate sponsor for the Armenian Cultural Conservancy's inaugural dinner held on October 29, 2016. The reception and dinner were held on the second floor of the Old Administration Building (OAB).

EECU's History with FCC

This beautifully renovated and restored room was a small example of the extensive structural improvements that were made possible by the generous contributions of the EECU, bonds, and other contributors. EECU is a foundation donor and has always financially supported FCC, whether to maintain facilities or for scholarships. In recent years, the cumulative donations from EECU has exceeded \$800,000.

The renovation of the 100,000 square-foot historic OAB, which had been left abandoned and boarded up for 30 years, began in 2007. It took four years to complete this historic building with the re-opening and ribbon cutting in January 2011. This was an extensive project, which involved removal of hazardous materials, seismic retrofitting, and mechanical, electrical, and plumbing upgrades. Fire and safety standards had to be brought up to code. All these projects were extremely expensive and time-consuming.

This building was designed by Architect George McDougall and it is again standing in its original grandeur. Mr. McDougall would be pleased to know his building still stands.

The ACC gratefully acknowledges the EECU Board of Directors for their financial support of this worthy endeavor.

By Margaret Hokokian