



# Armenian Cultural Conservancy NEWSLETTER



*Display of memorabilia of the Matevosian family, who were Armenian DP's of Stuttgart, Germany.*

## Editor's Reflections

*by Mary Mirigian Ekmalian*

It has been a long and painful two-year pause in Armenian Cultural Conservancy activities, but we have pushed the play button and are continuing our pursuit "to collect, preserve and interpret the Armenian experience in Central California in an enduring institution of learning."

This October Van Der Mugerdechian and Jane Knar installed an exhibit on Armenian culture in a Woodward Park Library display window. On October 28 the ACC premiered comedian Kev Orkian's travel film "Armenia Uncovered" at the Woodward Park Library. Unfortunately, due to technical difficulties on the library's part, the one-hour film took two hours to view. The good news is the full version is still available to view on line at [armeniauncovered.com](http://armeniauncovered.com).

During the month of January another Woodward Park Library display window featured memorabilia of the history of ANCHA (American National Committee to Aid Homeless Armenians) and the plans for a monument in Fresno. The ACC hosted a presentation and discussion of ANCHA led by Sophia Mekhitarian, the curator of the ANCHA window display. The presentation was videotaped thanks to arrangements

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## Remembering the Legacy of George Mardikian

*by Paulette Janian*

I attended a wedding at the Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Fresno.... In the beautifully redesigned patio courtyard of the Church, I noticed a fountain, gently sprinkling drops of water into a sparkling, blue pool. A bronze plaque next to it bore the title "George Mardikian Fountain." I immediately recognized the name and remembered a jovial, portly, mustachioed gentleman I met while attending Hastings College of the Law in San Francisco. Until I read the dedication on the plaque, I did not realize that this Armenian immigrant had ties to Fresno, and that he had served as a trustee of the Holy Trinity Church in the 1930's. I knew George as a prominent citizen of San Francisco and owner of The Omar Khayyam, a famous restaurant in the City, known for its Armenian Cuisine.

My family and I were frequent guests at the restaurant which was actually located downstairs below the street where guests, while dining, heard the cable cars rumbling overhead, packed with tourists. The fountain plaque memorializes the contribution of George Mardikian to the post World War II founding of the Armenian National Committee to Aid Homeless Armenians around the world. For his humanitarian efforts, George received the Medal of Freedom from President Harry S. Truman.

The plaque also acknowledges the contribution of a distinguished San Francisco attorney who helped George found the charitable organization: Suren M. Saroyan. Suren was a frequent visitor to the home of the Karageozians, my aunt and uncle, with whom I resided

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*Holy Trinity Armenian Church Fountain dedicated to George Mardikian.*

## Editor's Reflections

*Continued from page 1*

made by Sophie's daughter Susie Parnagian. When available, we will post it to our website.

The current ACC office at The Vineyards campus at the California Armenian Home will be open again on Fridays beginning June 3 from 10:00 to 2:00 and by appointment. We will start displaying things we have been collecting. Our latest acquisition was a collection of Armenian books and items from the estate of Vasken Sarkisian.

For more than two years we have not solicited donations nor membership dues. And we appreciated those of you who continued to make donations during our hiatus. Even though we are all volunteers, there are monthly operating expenses. We are now asking you to consider renewing your membership or becoming a new member or making a donation in support of our mission. An addressed envelope is enclosed for your convenience.

**We look forward to seeing you at our next meeting at the Woodward Park Library on Tuesday, May 24, at 6:30 p.m. The topic is Genealogy 101. Michelle Paloutzian Maggi and Van Der Muqrdechian, who have done extended research on their family genealogies, will give some guidance on how to approach searching one's ancestry.**

## GEORGE MARDIKIAN'S ALL-PURPOSE CAKE

2 cups brown sugar, packed  
2 cups flour  
1/2 cup butter

Blend above ingredients together as for pie by pinching the mixture with the fingers. Set aside half of this mixture for the bottom of the cake.

To the other half add:

1 beaten egg  
1 teaspoon nutmeg  
1 cup sour cream  
1 teaspoon baking soda

Mix sour cream and baking soda. Add beaten egg and nutmeg.

Grease well a square pan (9 x 9 inches) or use a rectangular pan. Put in the

crumbly mixture that has been reserved and spread evenly over the bottom of the pan. Then spread the other mixture over this and sprinkle the top with chopped nuts and cinnamon.

Bake in a moderate oven at 350 degrees for about 40 minutes. Do not open the oven door during half hour while cake is baking. The cake will have a somewhat hard caramel base. This makes a delicious cake for afternoon tea or for dessert with fruit.

*Editor's Note: Another interesting read is George Mardikian's autobiography SONG OF AMERICA, published in 1956.*

## George Mardikian

*Continued from page 1*

while attending law school. I remember Suren so well. Tall and slender with pure white hair and thin mustache, always wearing a suit, starched white shirt with cuff links, bowtie, and white handkerchief in his jacket pocket folded neatly to expose a triangle shape resembling the snow capped tip of Mt. Ararat. He was always animated, sitting on the edge of his chair telling us stories about his life and career, punctuating each phrase with broad gestures. Always a chivalrous gentleman, he surprised me one day when he said he was on his way to the movies—to see an X-rated film! Sensing my surprise he explained that lawyers need an open mind and must know a little about everything affecting our society. Suren never called me Paulette. I was always "Portia," after the protagonist in William Shakespeare's, "The Merchant of Venice." If you know the story, you will recall that Portia disguised herself as a man and assumed the role of a lawyer to appear in court and save a man's life through the use of legal technicalities.... Suren Saroyan was a pioneer in American-Armenian legal history. Born in Fresno, he graduated from Stanford University and was admitted to the California State Bar in 1929. He opened his law office in San Francisco where, in the early days, his wife served as office manager, secretary, and process server.

During World War II, he was named liquidation attorney for the State of

California in the closure of five Japanese owned banks deemed alien property in 1941 and 1942. "That's how Suren made his money," I heard old timers in the Armenian community remark. In 1945, he became "of counsel" at the San Francisco law firm known as Cartwright, Saroyan. Although I was told the firm was founded by Suren, my uncle disclosed that Suren was too sentimental and emotional to be a trial attorney and all trial work was done by Robert Cartwright....

**When President Lyndon Johnson signed the 1965 Immigration Act, George was presented with a signing pen**

Through the Armenian National Committee George and Suren, assisted by General Haig Shekerjian, worked tirelessly to assist over 25,000 Armenians, displaced during the War to immigrate to the United States, finding them homes and jobs. When President Lyndon Johnson signed the 1965 Immigration Act, George was presented with a signing pen. The George Mardikian Fountain was established in 2015, the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide. George Mardikian and Suren Saroyan lived, worked, and served the community for most of their lives in San Francisco, but they left their hearts in Fresno and both are buried here at the Ararat Cemetery.

*Editor's Note: In November 1944, George Mardikian published a cookbook, "Dinner at Omar Khayyam's." Reprinted above is my favorite recipe served at the ANCHA program on January 22, 2022 and requested by several individuals.*



# The Armenian DPs of Stuttgart 1943-1949

by Sophia (Matewosian) Mekhitarian

During WWII, thousands of Armenians were transported to Germany and placed in labor camps where they were used as slave labor. Upon the conclusion of WWII in 1945, one camp in particular found a way not only to survive, but to thrive in adverse conditions. This camp was outside Stuttgart, Germany, where men were taken to the Mercedes factory as free labor. Many of the men became shoemakers, having learned the trade from the Magdesian brothers. The men worked at this trade after hours to help their families.

It was in the winter of 1947 when George Mardikian, serving as a food consultant to the U.S. Army, met some 2,000 plus displaced persons (DPs) near Stuttgart, at camp Funkerkasserne. The highly gifted, talented, and intellectual leaders presented an unforgettable welcome program for Mr. Mardikian, one of their own countrymen, with the hope that he would be able to help them emigrate to the United States since aid organizations were being disbanded shortly after the war. The plight of the DPs was desperate since many of the people were being shipped back to their home countries. This was akin to torture since Russia at the time considered all captives traitors and would more than likely have sent them to Siberia as most of the camp dwellers were from Russia.

Mr. Mardikian, moved to tears, and having gone through desperate



*Funkerkasserne DP camp*



*Speaker Sophia Mekhitarian*



*Nazik (Kotcholosian) Messerlian reciting her poem "George Mardikian in Tribute".*

situations himself, promised the DPs he would do all he possibly could to help these, his countrymen, to emigrate to the United States. Three great leaders, George Mardikian, Suren Saroyan, Esq., and Brigadier General Haig

Shekerjian, with the assistance of the Armenian Revolutionary Federation and especially the Armenian Relief Society, made the dreams of the DPs a reality.



*Labor Camp Shoemakers*



*George Mardikian (center) and Gen. Haig Shekerjian (left) entering the camp*



*Camp children welcoming George Mardikian to Funkerkasserne*

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## Update on Vartanian House and Armenian Town

by Van Der Mugrdechian

We are happy to share that we are making progress in our ongoing effort to create an “enduring institution of learning” to showcase the Armenian-American legacy in Central California.

Recently we had the opportunity to meet with the City of Fresno Historical Preservation Specialist, as well as Heritage Fresno, to get an update on the Vartanian House and Armenian Town.

We were pleased to learn that the designation of Armenian Town as a historical district is actually still on the table, so we are currently formulating our campaign to make that happen.

The Vartanian House is still available, however, its fate rests on finding a new home for it. This effort will require a large amount of financial backing and further negotiations with the City of Fresno and the developer of Armenian Town. A true work in progress!

In the meantime we have been receiving donations for our Armenian-American Legacy project and have been looking into leasing a commercial space to open our Legacy Gallery. We will have a display outlining our goals at the Armenian Genealogy presentation on May 24th. We are excited about this project and look forward to sharing our vision with you.

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

- |  |      |  |       |   |         |
|--|------|--|-------|---|---------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Student membership    | \$20 | <input type="checkbox"/> Family membership   | \$75  | <input type="checkbox"/> Benefactor membership  | \$250   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Individual membership | \$50 | <input type="checkbox"/> Founding membership | \$100 | <input type="checkbox"/> Conservator membership | \$500+  |
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Please, make checks payable to Armenian Cultural Conservancy  
mail to: 2037 West Bullard Avenue, PMB 106, Fresno, CA 93711-1200

**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*

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.

This logo was created by Alain Ekmalian.

#### Armenian Cultural Conservancy

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Fresno, CA 93711-1200

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The Vineyards  
6694 East Kings  
Canyon Road  
Fresno, CA 93727  
Phone:  
559-835-0837

Office Hours: Fridays  
10:00 a.m. - 2:00 p.m.  
and by appointment

## Community Calendar

**Saturday, May 14, 5:30 p.m., Charlie Keyan Armenian Community School International Night**, 108 North Villa, Clovis, 559-323-1955

**Thursday, May 19, St. Mary Yettem Armenian Food Festival, Visalia Elks Lodge**, 3100 West Main, \$18, Lulu or Chicken Kebab, 11:00 a.m.-1:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. to 7:00 p.m., Bake Sale, DRIVE THRU ONLY, contact Tina at 559-967-2593 or [hyetina@lightspeed.net](mailto:hyetina@lightspeed.net) for tickets

**Saturday, May 21, 5:30 p.m., St. Gregory Armenian Church Bingo Night**, 229 South Third Street, Fowler, \$60 includes dinner, drinks, and two bingo cards, RSVP by May 14 to 559-834-2919, must be 21 and up to attend

**Sunday, May 22, 3:00 p.m., Zvartnots Dance Ensemble, Fresno High School Auditorium**, 1839 N. Echo Avenue, Fresno, to benefit Advance Armenia Foundation (Fresno Medical Mission), \$50 in advance, \$60 at the door, for tickets call 559-284-3810

**Tuesday, May 24, 6:30-8:30 p.m., ACC Genealogy 101 with Michelle Paloutzian Maggi and Van Der Mugrdechian**, Woodward Park Library, 944 East Perrin Avenue, Fresno

**Sunday, May 29, Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church Memorial Day Picnic**, 3673 N. First, Fresno, Food, Bingo, Backgammon, Bingo, Cake Walk, 229-2915

**SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, June 4, Charlie Keyan Armenian Community School 19th Annual Crab Feed Fundraiser**, 559-323-1955

**Saturday, June 11, 10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m., Heritage Fresno presents Fresno County's The Big Fresno Fair Museum Tour**, \$20 per person, RSVP 559-222-4443 or email [hamiltonlinda68@gmail.com](mailto:hamiltonlinda68@gmail.com)

**Sunday, June 19, St. Gregory Armenian Church Father's Day Picnic**, 220 S. Third Street, Fowler, services 9:30 a.m., picnic 11:30 a.m., music by Richard Hagopian

**June 20-June 24, 6:30-8:30 p.m., Vacation Bible School, "A Journey through Holy Week."** (Monday 5:30 p.m. Hotdog Dinner & Kick Off Rally, Tracy 559-285-4117

**June 13-July 29, Monday-Friday, 7:45 a.m.-3:15 p.m., Charlie Keyan Armenian Community School Summer School for Pre-K and Pre-K Potty-Training**, 559-323-1955

**July 18-22, 9:30-12:00, Holy Trinity Sunday School Vacation Bible School**, 5 years old and up, \$20, "Discovery on Adventure Island

**July 31-August 4, Pilgrim Armenian Congregational Church Vacation Bible School**, 559-229-2915

**SAVE THE DATE: Sunday, August 7, Holy Trinity Armenian Church Grape Blessing Festival**, 559-486-1141

**SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, September 10, 6:30 p.m. Fresno AGBU Armenian wine and cheese mixer**, 559-908-4729

**SAVE THE DATE: Sunday, September 24, St. Paul Armenian Church Festival**

**SAVE THE DATE: Friday, October 14, Holy Trinity Armenian Church Bazaar/Lunch**

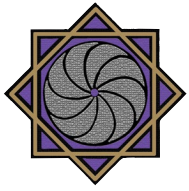
**SAVE THE DATE: Sunday, October 16, PACC Harvest Banquet**, 559-229-2915

**SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, October 22, Homenetmen Fresno Sassoon Chapter Annual Dinner-Dance**, featuring famous singer Hovsep Gomidas

**SAVE THE DATE: Saturday, November 19, "Deck the Halls Christmas Gala," Holy Trinity Armenian Church**

A request to all Armenian Community Organizations – Please e-mail community events to [armenianconservancy@gmail.com](mailto:armenianconservancy@gmail.com) as soon as they are set in order to include them in ACC's Newsletter Community Calendar and on our website.

Did you know? On April 20, 1965, Uruguay became the first nation in the world to recognize the Armenian Genocide.



## Armenian Cultural Conservancy

2037 W. Bullard Avenue, PMB 106  
Fresno, CA 93711-1200

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### Armenian Genealogy 101

Have you ever tried to find information about your ancestors and their journey to America?

Does knowing the names of family members, when they came to the United States, where they lived, what they did, what they did, interest you?

The pathway to finding answers begins with Armenian genealogical research.



Don't know how or where to start?

We do! And we'd like to share that with you on Tuesday, May 24th, 6:30pm at the Woodward Park Regional Library, Fresno.

The Armenian Cultural Conservancy will present the first of a series on Armenian genealogy. We'll share examples of what can be found, where to find it, and how to preserve your family legacy.



### Now on display in the ACC office at The Vineyards at the California Armenian Home

*4'x6' Armenian Tapestry donated by the family of Pearl Koligian  
depicting Armenian village life.*