



AC



M

Culture
Heritage
History
Language

Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota
Established 1980

MinneHyeLites

No. 164 Winter 2022/23

ANNOUNCING !!!

ACOM's Annual Gaghant Returns in person
GAGHANT with a touch of VALENTINE's day



Saturday, February 11, 2023
from 6:30pm till ?



New Location:
Cedarholm Community Room
2323 Hamline Ave. North
Roseville, MN 55113



Dinner catered by
Mim's Restaurant
Cash Bar (Beer and Wine)

Armenian Music for Listening and
Dancing by Music Mundial



Cost: \$35.00 (\$12 Children 5-10)
RSVP Please to: hyebar@yahoo.com
Registration form on following page

Celebrating 43 years
Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota
Invites you to

GAGHANT/NEW YEAR CELEBRATION
WITH A TOUCH OF VALENTINES
In-Person Event — New Venue

RSVP form due Monday, January 16, 2023

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

TELEPHONE: _____ EMAIL: _____

MIM's Middle Eastern Café will be catering, buffet style: chicken, kufta, falafel, vegetables, pilaf, hummus, bread, salad

CASH BAR will be available

ACOM will provide coffee and dessert

	<u>QUANTITY</u>	<u>TOTAL</u>
Adults _____ \$35 per person	_____	_____
Children (5-10 years old) _____ \$12 per child	_____	_____
<u>2023 ACOM Annual Membership Options:</u>		
Contributing Family Membership \$100 per family	_____	_____
Single or Family Membership \$35 each	_____	_____
I / We would like to donate to help defray Music Mundial band cost	_____	_____
TOTAL ENCLOSED		_____

Print and mail this completed form with your **payment to ACOM by January 16, 2023. Send to:**

Nairy Digris, ACOM Treasurer
1703 Skillman Avenue West
Roseville, MN 55113

For questions, contact ACOM President Steven Usitalo: 248-808-8615 or Nairy Digris: 651-639-9346

Additional Information:

ACOM had to find a new location for Gagbant as MidPointe Event Center in St. Paul's Midway area was torn down in 2021.

MUSIC MUNDIAL will be playing traditional and favorite Armenian dance music. The four-piece band includes violin, oud/guitar, accordion and percussion.

NO CHILDCARE will be available.

NO REFUNDS after January 30, 2023.

VALENTINE 'VALI' KARDASHIAN

Kardashian, Valentine "Vali" Age almost 94 (DOB 1/11/1929), of Chaska, passed away December 2nd, 2022.



Vali was an extraordinary woman with a BA in Education as well as a BA in Arts and Science. She immigrated to the USA with her husband in 1957.

During her life, she worked as an administrative assistant at UNICEF as well as various other jobs where she used her organizational skills and knowledge of many languages.

She raised 3 children, 1 girl and 2 boys, teaching them at home until they were old enough to go to school. While the children were in school, Vali joined the PTA where she was instrumental at making school

wide changes to everything from dress codes to lunch-room choices.

Her greatest gift to her friends and family was her willingness to help with anything and everything. She was devoted to helping others and she always made herself useful. Vali loved music and singing and never missed a chance to dance when someone would ask. She is survived by her 2 sons, a daughter-in-law, 5 grandchildren, 1 great grandchild, her brother and his wife, as well as other nieces, nephews, and many friends.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks you to consider making a memorial donation to Alzheimer's Foundation.

A Memorial Service was held Friday, December 9, 2022 at 11 a.m. with visitation one hour prior at the Washburn-McReavy Eden Prairie Chapel. Private Interment in the spring of 2023 at Lakewood Cemetery, Minneapolis. *Dec. 4, 2022*

ACOM WEBSITE

Remember to continue to check our website:

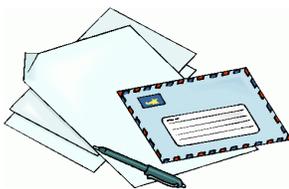
www.mnarmenians.org

FROM OUR MAIL BAG

SPEEDY RECOVERY TO:

Best wishes to **Mark Wiersbeck** who is recovering from knee surgery. Mark writes: "I had knee surgery on October 28 and everything went well. I tore another part of my meniscus on the same knee I had torn six years ago. No crutches this time and I'll be able to take the big bandage off tomorrow. Recovery will be a few weeks, but I'll be able to drive by tomorrow. Went for a run last April and every time I tried after that, it hurt. Finally went to the Doctor in September. Long story short, I was getting around ok until about a month ago, then overdid things a couple days in a row and that was it. Constant pain the last month when I put weight on it. Able to do short little walks now, but they want me to mostly rest the first couple days.

I had the same doctor who did the previous surgery. He's really good. I'll meet up with him for my follow-up in a couple weeks. I came home after surgery and actually I could walk and did steps that day. I've been taking it easy, but will take the band-



age wrap and coverings off in a few hours and take a much-needed shower! The pain is pretty low level and really only when I put weight on it. I'm getting tired of sitting around, looking forward to increasing my activity as allowed."

Mark W.

Andrea Johnson writes:

"I fell ice skating at Aldrich Arena. There was a gouge in the ice. The x-rays taken the same day, at Urgent Care, were read as a possible fracture of two wrist bones. The wrist bones were not out of alignment. The most recent x-rays, a week after the injury, were read as negative for fracture and I'm cleared to start PT. I still have some swelling and rainbow bruising and am taking OTC meds."

THANK YOU

Hello ACOM Board,
I received a nice gift box of chocolates today in the mail from you. That is very kind of you to think of me with my recent knee surgery. The operation went well and I've been walking more each day and getting my flexibility back. I'm going to share the chocolates with my mother Sarah, as she insisted on helping care for me during my recovery. Thanks again and hope you all have a wonderful Thanksgiving!

Mark W.

Dear Naïry and ACOM Board
Imagine my surprise to open a box that landed on

(Continued on page 4)

(Continued from page 3)

our porch and find a lovely gift of chocolates from you, my thoughtful friends. Thank you for warming our Christmas. The dark chocolate covered cashews and the festively-wrapped milk chocolate Santas were exquisitely delicious! My wrist is feeling better and I know it's in large part thanks to these treats! I am grateful for your caring and friendship. See you at Gagahant. Warmly,
Andrea J.

SYMPATHY

To the **Kardashian Family** on the loss of Valentine "Vali" Kadashian. See her obituary above.

To the **Goshgarian Family** on the loss of their granddaughter. While visiting with Pat and Paul Goshgarian at Vali Kardashian's funeral service, it was extremely sad to hear about their loss of their beloved 16-year-old granddaughter earlier in 2022. She was an angel who joined the other angels in heaven. Heartbreaking news. May God give the family all the strength and comfort they need.

NEWSLETTER #163

Folks, great ACOM NEWSLETTER..... as usual. Naïry, Terry & the ACOM Board, appreciate your work around the year. This newsletter exceeds anything that the church is doing to inform the Armenian Community in Minnesota and beyond. Along with the ACOM programs and events, it is the real glue that holds this community together, in my opinion. Apris!
Francis B.

Yes, I agree with Francis, it's a great newsletter. Best wishes
Steven U.

I agree! Great HyeLites! I enjoy the folksy-ness of the newsletter; it feels like a community conversation. Thanks for all the good work! A Luta Continua!
Kassian V.

CONGRATULATIONS



Caroline Ylitalo – SPARK Award
For career-long technical excellence; for extraordinary dedication to encouraging girls and women in science and engineering; and for a legacy of mentorship informed by wisdom and compassion.

<https://magazine.swe.org/spark-award-ylitalo-22/>

Hi all,

Darla Kashian was heavily mentioned in an article about building wealth without the benefit of home ownership. *StarTribune* 11-27-2022

If you are a subscriber, this should get you to the article.

<https://www.startribune.com/how-to-build-wealth-when-you-dont-own-your-home/600230431/>

Cynthia E.

ACOM "WHAT IS IT LIKE MARRIED TO AN ARMENIAN?"

Hi Terry and Steven,
I just watched the video from this Summer's program, *What's It Like Being Married to an Armenian*. Well done. The videography, Terry, thank you for preserving these programs on ACOM's fine website. Engrossing, your moderation of the program, Steven, with the interesting comments you added. Thank you. I look forward to future in-person ACOM events, Covid variants permitting. Best,
Andrea J.

ACOM VOSKI ASHOUN

Hi Terry & Naïry,
Special thanks for all the work you guys did to put on the Golden Autumn event. It was good to see you guys again and really appreciate all the work it takes to put the event on. Gratefully,
Aram & Ruth C.

Terry & Naïry
I really enjoyed the Voski Ashoun gathering at your backyard.
Francis B.

Thank you, Naïry, for the Voski Ashoun party yesterday. It was fun!
Thank you also for talking to my mother! She and I appreciate it.
Peka S.

Hello Naïry and Terry - thank you for hosting this year's Voski Ashoun. Margarita and I had a very nice time. It was not nearly as cold as we expected, not at all. Delicious s'mores and cognac, a great combination. Thank you again!
Steven U.

RECONNECTING

It was a great pleasure to see **Harut and Jackie Khachatryan** and their two children at the State Fair

and visit with them after ADE's performance. Here are some photos of their children for you to enjoy



Angelina and Michael

Mark Wiersbeck at the TPT Phones During TPT fundraising



ACOM NEEDS A WEBSITE DESIGNER

We would like to make a few modifications to our Website, so if you have that capability and think you have the time and willingness to help ACOM, please contact Terry McGibbon at: hyebar@yahoo.com. Thanks in advance.

Please get in touch with us if you have comments, suggestions, or would like to submit an article for an upcoming ACOM Newsletter.

Armenian Dance Ensemble

UPCOMING Performance Calendar

Date	Time	Place
2/19/2023	TBD	Black Sea performance
3/25/2023	1:00 PM	Brookdale Senior Living, Edina
4/11/2023	7:00 PM	Village Shores, Richfield
4/27/2023	2:30 PM	Jones Harrison, Minneapolis
5/21/2023	3:00 PM	Mt Olivet Care Center, Minneapolis

NOTE: dates and times are accurate at the time of publishing. For an up-to-date calendar, please visit our website: mnarmenians.org

ACOM Book Club News

If you are interested in joining this group, contact Leroy at: leroy.erickson@minnmicro.com

ARMENIAN DANCE LESSONS FOR KIDS

Are there children whose parents want them to learn simple Armenian dance steps? Naïry would be willing to set up a Sunday afternoon teaching schedule. If you are interested please contact her at:



651-639-9346 or email her at yekibdos@gmail.com

ACOM BOARD MEMBERS 2022-23

- President: Steven U.
- Vice President: Azad M.
- Past President: John P-D B.
- Secretary: Annie B-W./Open
- Communications Secretary: Lynne G.
- Treasurer: Naïry D.
- Members at Large: Kassian V., Alarica H., Terry M.
- Webmaster & Newsletter Editor: Tom K.
- Board Advisor:

Any ACOM dues-paid member who is interested in serving on the Board is welcome to contact us:

www.mnarmenians.org

Likewise, get in touch with us if you have comments, suggestions or would like to submit an article for an upcoming ACOM Newsletter.

NEWS OF COMMUNITY INTEREST

Nostalgia, Intricate Detail & Surprise Part Of Aquatennial Target Fireworks

The top 5 annual display took 140 Hours



To Design & Choreograph

Zach Taminosian has been around fireworks all his life—from his days growing up in Fort Myers, Fla., setting them off in the back yard to his profession as one of Zambelli Fireworks' show designers. But for all the thousands of hours he's been around them in his life, he can pinpoint the moment he fell in love with fireworks and knew it was what he wanted to do for a career.

It was in Fort Myers, at the Minnesota Twins' brand new spring training facility in 1991. The display put on to help christen the new facility left an imprint on him as a child, and it never went away.

"The fireworks that went along with the celebration really sparked my first interest in professional fireworks displays," he said. "I loved fireworks growing up, but that was the first time I was intrigued with a choreographed show to music. And it ultimately led me back to Minnesota."

Taminosian is annually the designer for the Minneapolis Aquatennial's Target Fireworks, which take place tonight at 10 pm along the Mississippi River. The event is considered one of the top five annual fireworks displays in the country, and rightfully so. It attracts approximately 250,000 people to the Mississippi Riverfront near the Stone Arch Bridge, and the picturesque view of the Minneapolis skyline is the perfect backdrop for a nationally renowned show.

Each year, he said he directly works on more than 30 fireworks displays nationally and approximately another 200 shows indirectly through logistics, design and product ordering. But the Target Fireworks at Aquatennial always stand out.

It's a pyromusical, if you will. The fireworks, which typ-

ically last 20-25 minutes, are a spectacle on their own. But they're intricately choreographed to music, each blast matching with a note or a beat within the song playing. It takes Zambelli 2-4 hours of design time per minute of show duration to carefully match up the blasts with the beat, and that's what makes this show extra special. This year's music is 1980s themed as Aquatennial celebrates its 80th anniversary.

You can hear the music on-site as you're watching, but if you are within view of the fireworks from another location you can listen to the simulcast on KOOL 108 FM.

The time and effort put into making this fireworks show special is personal for Taminosian, who thinks back to that display in Fort Myers 25 years ago when he arrives in town. This is a nostalgic display for him personally, but he also understands the importance the Target Fireworks play for Minneapolis and Aquatennial goes.

"This is one of my favorite shows," Taminosian said. "I love Minneapolis. I love coming here every year. Just the backdrop, the downtown Minneapolis cityscape, and the bridge architecture is just an amazing canvas for me to paint."

It's always recommended that people come early and enjoy the festivities while saving a spot along West River Parkway. Viewing areas fill up fast. While you're waiting, enjoy pre-fireworks festivities from 6-10 pm including live music, food trucks, and the Family Fun Zone presented by Tom's of Maine.

And of course, there is a major fireworks display that's worth the wait.

"This show is designed with the audience in mind," Taminosian said.

Target Fireworks Fast Facts

Typically uses more than 10,000 pounds of explosives
The Choreography process for the Target Fireworks takes anywhere from 2 to 4 hours of design time per minute of total show duration

This year's Target Fireworks took 140 hours of design, choreography and set-up to perform.

One of the top five largest fireworks show in the country

Draws around 250,000 spectators to Downtown Minneapolis

Come early to find a spot along the river—bring sunscreen for the afternoon and bug spray for the evening. It's worth it to see a fantastic show!

One of the best vantage points to take in the show is on the west side of the Mississippi River, along West River Parkway near Portland Avenue.

Zambelli Fireworks is a full service fireworks display and pyrotechnics company.

Since 1893 Zambelli Fireworks has been shooting over 2,300 displays annually

From Aquatennial Interview 2016

NEWS OF COMMUNITY INTEREST

(Continued from page 6)

It was a pleasure to see and talk with Ed K., one of ADE's former dancers at the MN State Fair in August. He is one of Schubert Society Museum Interpretive Guides and he was telling us about **Beatrice Ohanessian's Steinway piano** which is in the museum at the Schubert Club and how he feels lucky and honored to occasionally play it. For details read on:

A Steinway with a Story- Barry Kempton, *Artistic & Executive Director*

Schubert Club

**Steinway & Sons Grand Piano,
Model B- Hamburg**



**Made by: Steinway & Sons, 20th Century
Shiny black finish**

Made in Hamburg, Germany

The piano, a 7-foot Steinway B grand piano built in Hamburg around 1980 is a gift to us by **Sita Ohanessian**, a close friend of the Schubert Club. Sita has lovingly cared for the piano since her beloved sister **Beatrice** passed away in 2008.

I have had the good fortune to get to know Sita in my six years with Schubert Club and, through Sita, I have learned much about Beatrice, an outstanding piano soloist and composer. Born in Baghdad, Beatrice studied at the Royal Academy of Music in London and the Juilliard School in New York. Because she missed her homeland – and contrary to the advice of many who wanted her to stay in the States to pursue a performing career –she returned to Iraq to “teach my fellow countrymen to love music”.

Thanks to a book about Beatrice Ohanessian written by former Schubert Club staff member Holly Windle in 2008 entitled “Baghdad Barcarolle”, I am

happy to retell the fascinating story of the Ohanessian Steinway piano.

Beatrice was primarily a concert pianist and held the position of principal concert pianist for the Iraqi National Symphony Orchestra. She also composed a number of musical works and received praise for them. She learned that colleagues had brought her music to the attention of the President of Iraq, Saddam Hussein. On receiving recommendations and hearing a recording of her music, Saddam offered to reward Beatrice with a gift from the Iraqi government in honor of her cultural services. She ignored suggestions from her friends of a gold watch or a car, and decided instead to ask for a new piano to replace her ailing Bechstein grand.

Beatrice was invited to the palace and went apprehensively. She waited to be received by Saddam. She waited a long time. She was eventually told that Saddam was busy in an emergency meeting with his cabinet due to an event in the Iran-Iraq war. He was in the room right next door, but he was not going to be available to see her in person. Instead the offer of a gift from the State was made to her by a palace official. Beatrice told him that she would like a piano, to which the official said they would arrange for her to pick one from the local department store. Emboldened by the fact that this proposal came from an official and not from President Saddam Hussein himself, Beatrice responded that she would like it to be a Steinway and that it would have to be purchased in Germany. To help the official understand, she explained the difference as choosing a Mercedes over a bicycle. To her surprise, the official agreed and she left the palace with a certificate authorizing her to purchase a Yamaha or a Steinway and to have the bill paid by the government of Iraq. On her next concert tour in Europe, Beatrice visited a Steinway showroom and selected a beautiful Steinway B.

Beatrice was separated from it for a while when she herself moved to the States and the piano remained in Iraq, but eventually it was shipped to the States, and piano and pianist were reunited. How lucky we are that they were! We have been fortunate to count sisters Beatrice and Sita in our Schubert Club family for many years. Taking possession of the Steinway piano, we will treasure it as a dear member of our family of musical instruments.

Link to Original Article

<https://schubert.org/collection/steinway-sons-grand-piano-model-b-hamburg/>

ABOUT the CAFESJIAN ART TRUST

The Cafesjian Art Trust (the Trust) is one of three trusts established by Gerard Cafesjian to fulfill his charitable interests, one of which was to establish a museum in the Twin Cities area for his collection of studio art glass. Mr. Cafesjian died in 2013. His estate and the charitable trusts were initially tied up in audits but are now settled. A scholarly curator managed his art collection until the curator's death in 2020. The 2,700 pieces that will constitute the starting collection of the new museum include studio glass by international artists, some in depth, including works by Dale Chihuly, Stanislav Libensky and Jaroslava Brychtová; and contemporary artwork by Arshile Gorky, Victor Vasarely, and Georges Braque. The Trust holds sufficient funds to support much of the new museum's operation, providing fiscal stability.

There is an evolving vision for the new museum. Trustee leadership recognizes their need for a colleague well versed in art museum management. Their current concept encompasses small exhibitions in-house, with group tours and educational programs engaging area schools, colleges, and artists. An early focus will be on building relationships with other museums to which the Trust will lend pieces for temporary exhibitions. The Trust leadership anticipates some culling and future additions in the interest of building a definitive collection of studio art glass.

The Trust acquired a building that previously served as headquarters of a large engineering firm, located in Shoreview, a suburb of St. Paul, near a main road and adjacent to a future restaurant. Renovation plans by an architectural consultant included

ample storage, 5,000 square feet of exhibition space, offices, meeting space, and a catering kitchen. The building has an all new museum-quality HVAC, interior features, roof, and landscaping.

The **Cafesjian Art Trust** is free and open to the public for guided tours only. **Reservations are required.** Both individuals and groups are encouraged to visit.

Hours Thursday – Saturday 10:00 am – 5:00 pm
Location: 4600 Churchill Street, Shoreview, MN, 55126

Another of Mr. Cafesjian's trusts funds a museum in Armenia. The Cafesjian Art Trust leadership stays in regular contact with that museum and has an advisory role.

The Trustee is an heir of Mr. Cafesjian. The Trust's staff consists of a CFO, an accountant who worked for legal and real estate firms before coming to the Trust; warehouse managers in Minnesota and Florida supervising processing of crated artworks; an art mover who worked with the previous curator in the Twin Cities warehouse; and a technical specialist who works remotely on the collections catalogue, using TMS software.

The Cafesjian family has a history of loyalty to effective employees, several of whom have had long tenures. The Trust has been moving deliberately during the protracted audit without a long-term plan. Now it is eager to ramp up its efforts, refining and realizing its plans in collaboration with an art museum leader.

Website: <https://cafesjianarttrust.org/>

STORIES and COINCIDENCES by Mark W.

Two odd coincidences to report on and both occurred in one day!

Our story begins (uh oh) with my having a little time to kill before meeting Marty for lunch in the morning. I stop into a sporting goods store, wanting to check out baseball memorabilia. As I'm looking through things, I come across this small box that may hold a bobble head or something. I'm looking on the side of it and it must be part of a set, because it has six names there. One of them is Leon Varjian. I've never heard of him, but am (of course) intrigued by seeing this Armenian name. So I Google him. Turns out he was a legendary prankster during his college days, before becoming a high school math teacher in Jersey. He passed away in 2015, but look him up to see some of his shenanigans. Anyway, in 1975, while attending Indiana University in Bloomington, IN, as a prank, he ran for mayor. Actually, he finished third, despite not being serious. Kind of like

a Pat Paulson, if you remember him.

Here's where the story gets interesting. It mentions the two people that finished ahead of him. One was Charlotte Zietlow, who finished second. A former co-worker of mine, Nahan, at Cargill (and we still play fantasy baseball together) has the last name of Zietlow. Secondly, I recall Nathan also went to Indiana U. So I emailed him, asking if he knows this Charlotte. Turns out it's his MOTHER! How crazy is that. He asks how I know about this and I mention looking up this Leon Varjian. Well, Nathan remembers and knew Leon from back then. On top of that, the man that won that mayoral race, Frank X. McCloskey, ended up going to DC as a congressman - which, get this, Nathan then went to work for during the early 90s. Yeah, can't make this up.

The second one is from that evening. I worked a banquet at Marriott and started chatting with one of the guests. Turns out he's originally from Pierre, SD.



ACOM CALENDAR OF EVENTS - January- April 2023

Questions, Suggestions, email: steven.uusitalo@gmail.com
 or call ACOM President Steven at: 248-808-8615

DATE	DAY	TIME	EVENT
Feb 11	Sat	6:30 PM	ACOM's Annual Gagbant
Apr 22	Sat	TBD	Genocide Commemoration Event

NOTE: dates and times are accurate at the time of publishing. For an up-to-date calendar, please visit our website: mnarmenians.org



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One of my HS classmates was mayor there for a while. Once I mentioned that, he tells me he worked with her in a financial capacity for the city back then.

So, what lies ahead? Who knows, but I'll pass along when it does.

Another note from Mark W.:

“Just came across another fellow Armenian. This is a basketball player for the University of Wisconsin. I discovered him tonight, as I was going to check the Wisconsin game, since they have a few Minnesotans on their team. I see the name Essegian and started to look him up. He’s from Fort Wayne, IN, but went to a small town HS and was an all-time star player in the state of Indiana. The Gophers actually were recruiting him, but he chose Wisconsin over them and other Division 1 schools. He’s a true freshman and unless you’re really good, you don’t play much, if at all, especially for a really good basketball school like Wisconsin, which is currently ranked #22 in the country. Per the **link below**, he had 17 points against Kansas, which is perennially a national power in the hunt for National Championships. So that tells you he’s playing big time minutes and at crucial times for them. Pretty impressive. Also, interesting connections to relatives who accomplished feats in their own right, years ago.”

https://uwbadgers.com/roster.aspx?rp_id=11116

J. Parker Der Boghossian - Podcast



A new podcast, “This Queer Book Saved My Life,” debuted June 21. The podcast, created by **J.P. (John Parker) Der Boghossian**, will feature interviews with LGBTQ guests sharing the queer book that saved their lives, then meeting with the book’s author. Der Boghossian is

founder and curator of the Queer Armenian Library and is past president of the Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota. He is equity and inclusion officer for Normandale Community College. Since 2015, J.P. has delivered keynotes and presentations at conferences throughout the Midwest on topics such as inter-cultural competency, LGBTQ health and racial equity, implicit biases and culturally responsive organizations. In 2020, Der Boghossian launched the Queer Armenian library, the world’s first devoted to books and media about Queer Armenians. He will release three podcasts June 21, then produce a weekly episode. The first programs will feature an array of authors including National Book Award finalist Carmen Maria Machado and Minnesota award winning children’s book author David LaRoche. For information go to: thisqueerbook.com.

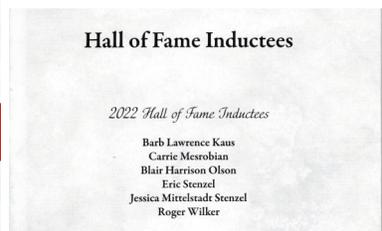
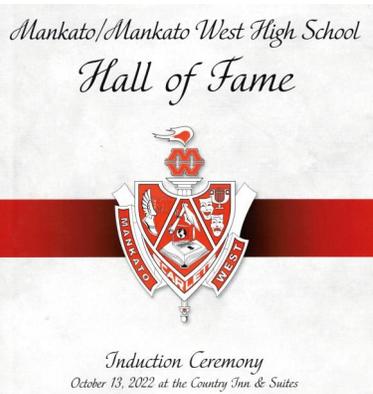
Mary Ann Grossmann can be reached at 612-418-0289 and mgrossmann@pioneerpress.com

Azad and Karen Mesrobian share a very proud moment about their daughter Carrie with ACOM

“Every parent wants to boast about their children’s accomplishments. That is more evident in Armenian families as there is not much to boast about. Maybe we can claim the distinction of being the first nation on earth to accept Christianity, although not many attend church except a couple of times a year, aside from weddings and funerals.

We were surprised when our daughter **Carrie Mesrobian** was nominated after more than 25 years by her Spanish teacher. It was a lovely night during the H.S Homecoming Weekend. The Governor and First Lady were in attendance as they introduced a couple of athletes. Of course, the Governor was the coach and history teacher at West after both our girls graduated.”

Azad Mesrobian



EDWARD AVEDISIAN

I am sharing this article which I condensed from the AMAA announcement. I found out that there is plenty written about Edward Avedisian’s philanthropy in business magazines. It is interesting to note that my parents who never finished grade school had a lifelong goal to educate us and finish at least high school. They sacrificed their meager income to have us educated. I think this is one of the virtues Armenian Genocide survivors left us.

Azad Mesrobian

The Armenian Missionary Association of America announced the passing of Edward Avedisian on Dec. 7, 2022.

Mr. Avedisian was a humble man with generous heart and an immense love for Armenia and Armenian heritage, His legacy will remain alive especially for the generation of students at the Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian K-12 school in Yerevan, Armenia in honor of his parents who had placed extremely high value on education throughout their lives.

The son of Armenian Genocide survivors, Edward Avedisian was born in 1937 in Pawtucket, Rhode Island and graduated from Boston University with BM and MM degrees. For thirty-five years, he was a member of Boston Pops and spent forty-three seasons with the Boston Ballet Orchestra as a clarinetist. His professional career spanned four disciplines: a performing symphonic musician, a university professor an arts administrator, an astute investor and a philanthropist.

In 1998, Edward and Pamela Avedisian founded the Avedisian School in the Malatya, Sepastia district of Yerevan in honor of his parents. Tuition free for students from economically disadvantaged families. It is the only building in the Republic of Armenia to be awarded the LEED Earth Designation. His Philanthropy served countries on both side of the Atlantic. His many contributions in Armenia include investment to the American University of Armenia, the Dzidzemagapert Genocide Memorial, Nor Marash Children’s Cardiac Hospital and complete renovation of a school in Haghtanag Village.

In the United States, a gift was made to the University of Rhode Island College of Pharmacy. He and Pamela were the principal benefactors of newly constructed NAASR headquarters. In 2022, the Rhode Island College was the recipient of a donation in honor of his sister, Zvart Ohanian, naming the College of nursing in her honor. In Dec. of 2022 a transformative \$100M gift he made to the University of Boston

(Continued on page 11)

Mankato West High School Class of 1992

Carrie has taught in both public and private school districts, is an avid writer, and a published author. Her writing has appeared in several publications including the Star Tribune, Child Magazine, Calyx, and Brain, along with other web and print publications. She is also the author of multiple books: "Cuts Both Ways", "The Whitsun Daughters", "Love and Profanity", "Sex and Violence" "Perfectly Good White Boy" and also "Just a Girl." Carrie currently teaches creative writing at The Loft Literary Center in Minneapolis where she shares her Armenian and Norwegian heritage with students and staff alike.

Acceptance Remarks: Thank you so much for this honor. Surviving high school is no small thing; I'm glad that I had teachers like Jack Halvorson, who taught me Spanish and chaperoned an unforgettable trip to Spain with my dear friend Danielle Stedman; Roger Wilker, who coached my husband and I and our friend Ben Green in Academic Decathlon, and taught me how to think and study and push myself; the late Martin Wilgen, who always reminds me of beauty; and Jane Schostag, who taught me not only how to structure writing in order to communicate and persuade, but also how to recognize propaganda and see how it can manipulate people. I also loved the MWHS library and hope that it is still open, operational, and staffed by a credentialed librarian who can help young people find the information they need and help them enjoy stories in the way I do.

Nominator Remarks: "Carrie is a freelance copywriter at Collegis Education. She researches and writes articles, on behalf of Rasmussen University, to help empower students to achieve their career dreams through higher education: A few examples: 7 In-Demand Healthcare Jobs That Don't Require a Degree, I'm Struggling in College... Now What?, 7 Versatile Degrees for Keeping Your Options Open, 7 Unexpected Things I Learned in Nursing School. <https://www.rasmussen.edu/student-life/blogs/author-archives/carrie-mesrobian/>"



Carrie Mesrobian
Professional

Presented by:
Adrian Durand

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Medical School to support scholarship, endowed faculty chairs and cutting-edge research and teaching. The school was jointly named Aram Chobanian & Edward Avedisian School of Medicine. Aram was his oldest brother's friend who became a tremendous cardiologist and then the president of Boston University. He made huge advances in the study of high blood pressure. Avedisian has ended his investing and philanthropic life by helping kids be doctors by saying "All these kids have way too much debt. You've got to help people out where they need. What did what's his name say? Carnegie....'I want to die broke' - I'm the same.

PS: On a personal note, I was introduced to Mr. Avedisian in the airplane on the way to Armenia from Paris. He was attending the dedication of Khoren and Shooshanig Avedisian High School. The Armenian sitting next to me stated that he knew him well and wanted to introduce me. We went to his seat where he was sound asleep and woke him up. I thanked him for his devotion to the Motherland. I will never forget his profound words saying "these are our children and need our help." Yes indeed, our Motherland needs help.

WHAT IS IT LIKE BEING MARRIED TO AN ARMENIAN

The fourth presentation in the series "What is it like being Married to an Armenian" was held Saturday, September 10th 2022 at the Merriam Park Library.

Panelists for this fourth session were Lowell Johnson (Andrea) and Jim Favre (Margaret). Steve Usitalo moderated the session and the attendees were taken on a fascinating journey to local areas and also to broader areas of the world, including Armenia itself. Members of the audience contributed supporting stories for the two panelists. ACOM provided some light refreshments after the formal session.

JAMES (JIM) FAVRE Bio



ACOM member, Jim, lives in Rochester MN with his wife Margaret. He has volunteered at the ACOM food booth and cultural demonstration at multiple Festival of Nations. He has regularly attended the annual Gagghant celebration. He has also brought Armenian

exchange students from southern Minnesota to these ACOM events. He has more recently participated in the ACOM book club.

Jim was born in Prairie du Chien, Wisconsin. His ethnic background is "enriched European" - a blend primarily of Swiss, German, and French. He attended St Gabriel grade school and Campion High School. After college, he taught secondary school, then spent thirty years developing computers with IBM. In retirement, Jim and Margaret volunteer a lot and enjoy their three children and six grandchildren.

Margaret's mother was Armenian, her father was French-Canadian. Her mother was an astute business woman who ran a fruit and newspaper store. But regrettably, Margaret's mother died of breast cancer when Margaret was seven. Margaret was then raised by her French Canadian relatives.

They were married in 1970. Margaret did not initially bring Armenian cooking into their life, but she brought hundreds of new people and hundreds of unique experiences.

Their Armenian network became stronger when they moved to Rochester in 1974. "Sammy" Samehlian, the jeweler (and Amy's grandfather) lived in our neighborhood. They also met the two young mothers who came to Rochester to get prostheses after losing legs in the Armenian earthquake of Dec 7, 1988, and they met the many local Armenians who supported them: Helen Pompeian, Sarah Wiersbeck and Arminé Matentsian.

Jim retired from IBM in 2004. A month later, he was in Yerevan, Armenia, building houses with a 'Habitat for Humanity' team led by Cynthia Erickson. He spent time on this trip with Francis B, Mark W., Michelle H, and Steve R-N.

A year after he retired, Margaret did also, and they started volunteering and exploring as a team. She continued to open up a world of contacts and new Armenian experiences for them.

In June 2010, Margaret was part of a women's build in Vanadzor. While there, she got one of Jim's high school classmates, Jack Garvey from Dilijan to help with the build. They have visited with her team leader, Patricia Zerounian, several times in California.

They spent a year in Americus, Georgia, working with Millard Fuller, who started Habitat for Humanity, at his request to internationalize his second organization, Fuller Center for Housing. The first international member was Armenia. In Georgia, they met Nana, whom they have visited multiple times, the last one in the Bronx.

In 2018 they volunteered at a youth summer camp near Tsakhkadzor. Lou Ann Matossian had put them in contact with the group of sisters, headquar-

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tered in Pennsylvania, who ran the camp and an orphanage in Gyumri. The king and queen of Belgium, Philippe and Mathilde, and their four children came to visit. They all boarded buses and went to Gyumri to welcome and entertain them. An example of new friends: two young German girls, members of the Girl Guides, volunteered at the camp with them. That December, they were volunteering in Frankfurt, Germany, teaching English to German business people. The two girls took a train to Frankfurt to tour the Christmas Market with them. At the camp, Jim also made friends with a teenage boy, Sevada, who was an aspiring artist and good with technology and who helped Jim teach computer usage to grade school level students. He also spoke English, Russian, and Armenian. In Gyumri, they also attended a blessing of the grapes service with Diana Mkoyan, whom they had met on a build.

Over the years they have met many Armenians in Rochester, including Mayo Clinic resident Hagop Tabibian, Sarah-Mark Wiersbeck's mother, and various members of the Pompeian family. Helen Pompeian established Rochester's Transplant House because of her son Edward's transplant. His sister Sharon remains a good friend.

They have had multiple exchange students in their home, including Victoria (Vika) Avagyan from Astana, Kazakhstan. Her father ran a paving business. When they went past asphalt road work in Rochester, Vika said, "That smells exactly like my father." They found other Armenia exchange students in southeast Minnesota, including Anahit from Gyumri whose hosts were in Wabasha. She helped them at the St Paul Festival of Nations. They later met with Anahit and her relatives at their winery in Yerevan. In Gyumri, Anahit and her friends gave them a city tour. Over the years they continued to meet with Gohar in Yerevan, and with Tatevik and her family in Vanadzor.

They lived for a year at Old Mission Santa Barbara, volunteering with the Franciscans there. They made friends with Ronnie Shahbazian, an Armenian, who was a city bus driver. Ronnie took them to an annual Armenian picnic in Fresno and to a relative's orchards near Fresno where they picked and ate fresh figs right off the tree.

For several years they have volunteered with Project Save, founded by Ruth Thomasian, in Watertown, Massachusetts, preserving and archiving historic photographs. They interacted with a larger Armenian community there including Robert Kaloosdian, the author of a book "Tadem, My Father's Village", the area Margaret's relatives came from. An-

drea and Lowell also volunteered at Project Save. Tsoleen, whom they worked with there for several years, has repatriated to Armenia this past year.

They sought out Armenian churches and contacts wherever they went. While studying in Bulgaria, they visited the Armenian Church in Plovdiv. The custodian let them into the main door of the church with a giant metal key. They also met the pastor, who happened to be a best friend and classmate of Fr Tadeos. Small world. They also sought out the Armenian church in Singapore. The Raffles Hotel was established by Armenian hôteliers and is the home of the Singapore Sling.

In 2018, they went to a special Armenia collection at the New York Metropolitan Museum of Art, with artifacts gathered from all over the world for this exhibit. Their companions were Armenian friends from the Twin Cities, Leroy and Cynthia, and Lowell and Andrea.

Last month, they toured St Olaf college with their granddaughter. An Armenian teacher, Ariel, and two Armenian students, Inna and Lilit, gave them the tour. St Olaf has a very inclusive program for foreign students and currently has a group from Armenia.

They have met many Armenians through ACOM and St Sahag, and are very grateful that all have enriched their lives. Because of Margaret, the Armenian thread remains a very strong element in Jim's life.

LOWELL JOHNSON Bio



How/where did you and your spouse meet?

Lowell and Andrea met in Eveleth, Minn. about 30 years ago. They both belonged to a ski club which sponsored many alternative activities in the summer. They had each signed up for a weekend of bicycling on the Iron

Range. On the second day the rest of the people in our group decided to go golfing. That didn't interest either of them, so they formed their own peloton (biking group) for the day.

How long have you been married to your Armenian wife/husband?

Lowell and Andrea were married June 13, 1998.

How much did you know about Armenians before meeting your spouse?

Lowell says "to the best of my recollection, I knew little or nothing about Armenia before we were married. I probably didn't know it from Algeria, Albania, Afghanistan, or Azerbaijan! But since our marriage, I

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have been gradually accumulating books, maps, and knowledge”.

How involved or affected have you been by your Armenian in-law family?

Many years ago Lowell's mother-in-law, Margaret Thomassian Johnson, occasionally attended ACOM and St Sahag events, as well as the Ohanessian Lectures at the University of Minnesota. Lowell and Andrea sometimes accompanied her.

What is your own ethnic background?

Lowell is mostly Swedish with a little Norwegian. His grandparents and great-grandparents immigrated to the US.

How involved were you in the community of your own ethnic group?

They occasionally visit the American Swedish Institute in Minneapolis, and have also been to the Norway House, not too far away, but not since their most recent expansion. For several years they belonged to the Twin Cities Swedish Folk Dancers.

Have you gotten involved in the Armenian community because of your spouse and how much?

Lowell lets Andrea take the lead on Armenian related activities and often joins her. Currently she is active in the book club. Once in a while when she thinks one of their selections might interest him, he will read it and attend the meeting. He has also read a few other books about Armenians or Armenia that were not on the book club agenda.

How much have you learned about Armenians? Alphabet, language, history, cooking, etc.

At the St Paul Festival of Nations, they always stopped at the Armenian cultural booth, ate at the Armenian food booth, and watched the Armenian Folk Dancers.

Lowell has read a good deal of Armenian history. Andrea is the real scholar in the family and they frequently discuss these things. So a little of her knowledge rubs off on Lowell.

Another interesting tie (both intended and accidental) to Armenia has been through some of their travels.

They traveled to Armenia with the Fuller Center and Cynthia Erickson in a group of about 15 from all over the US. They stayed in Vanadzor, three or four hours north of Yerevan, and their project was in the village of Lejon, another hour further northwest.

They once took a tour of Turkey and added two days on their own at the beginning to visit the home town of Andrea's grandfather, Daniel. Afyon is a small city of about 100,000 in the west central part of Turkey. It is definitely off the tourist track. There

were few people who spoke English. There they found a restored Ottoman neighborhood where Daniel lived, but not the house. Later on, the tour stopped in Konya where Daniel had attended school. They had a photo of the school, but the building was gone. They did run into two Italian Roman Catholic priests at the only church still standing in Konya, St. Paul's Catholic Church. The priests related that there were no Armenians left living in Konya. The last, a retired dentist, had moved to Ankara a year earlier. They did show them a small building that once held an Armenian chapel (underground). This was "secret" knowledge and they said if the authorities found out they would raze the building. In Istanbul they found an Armenian Catholic church near Taksim Square. They had a short conversation with the Armenian caretaker there but, unfortunately, had to leave too soon in order to rejoin their group.

Once, on a ship cruising through the Chilean fjords, Tierra del Fuego, the ship stopped for a little free time in a small remote town, Puerto Williams. Lowell and Andrea had walked but a few minutes when they came upon a Khatchkar. It was standing on an empty lot all by itself. They later found out that it had been placed there by an Armenian sea captain to honor sailors lost at sea in the Drake Passage.

On another trip they stopped in Leiden, Netherlands. The oldest university in Europe is there and the town was also a very early center for printing. They saw an exhibit there of some of the earliest printed Armenian Bibles.

Favres tipped them off on another volunteer activity. They spent a week at the Project Save Archive in Watertown, Mass. There they worked scanning and cataloging old photographs and documents.

Along with the Ericksons and the Favres they traveled to New York City to see the Armenian Exhibit at the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

What do you like most about Armenians?

Lowell has met a great number of Armenians at gatherings he has attended and participated in. Without fail, he has found these people to be interesting and friendly.

What do you dislike most about the Armenians, such as habits that seem to be typically Armenian?

"Somehow (fortunately) I have missed this person."

INTERESTING HISTORY OF ARMENIANS IN EGYPT. Check the link below.

<https://armenian-history.com/armenians-in-egypt/>

ARMENIAN DANCE ENSEMBLE OF MINNESOTA



I had the opportunity to choreograph four new Armenian dances that I am teaching on Zoom and in person. I did some research and found out there were no steps associated with the well-known Armenian songs that were interesting to teach to groups: Noubar Noubar, Karnar Mekhag, and Soudé Soudé. Since I liked these pieces, I decided to share them with the folkdance community and choreographed some simple, yet Armenian-style inspired steps. I also choreographed a simple Kochari to teach on ZOOM and at Tapestry.

For additional information, call Nairy: 651-639-9346 or email: yekibdos@gmail.com



ADE at Ukraine Holiday Festival - Ukrainian American Community Center

The Armenian Dance Ensemble was invited to perform in a Holiday Festival on Nov. 27, 2022

Dance Ensemble Highlights

ARMENIAN FOLKDANCE LESSONS ON ZOOM

We are continuing the practice we started on Sunday, August 30, 2020, teaching Armenian folk dances on ZOOM on the **last Sunday of each month**. The dance steps are explained and demonstrated, and then the participants are able to do them with the music in the "comfort" of their own homes. Since these are not choreographed dances, anyone interested in Armenian music and dance is invited to join. ZOOM sessions are set up for each month starting at 1:30 pm.

There has been a substantial amount of interest for this event on line, and the participants have been Armenians and non-Armenians alike, from all around the US as well as overseas. If anyone is interested in receiving the link in order to participate, send me an email and I will add your name to the list. The ZOOM invitation will come to you by email about 1 day before the event.

Email Nairy @ yekibdos@gmail.com

Centennial Lakes, Edina; VA Diversity Day, Minneapolis; State Fair, St. Paul

So impressed with the love and dedication of all the performers! Greetings to all!!!

Fr. Abraham Malkhasyan (Deacon Manuk)

Members of the Armenian Dance Ensemble of MN: I just received the email below from my contact at Centennial Lakes. You should all be pretty proud of yourselves. Good job and thanks! **Nairy**

"As we wrap up our summer concert season at Centennial Lakes Park, I wanted to reach out and thank you for your amazing performance in August. We got lots of positive comments from audience members for multiple days after your performance!

Please stay in contact and reach out with any questions/comments/concerns you might have. Looking forward to connecting with you again soon!" **Megan**

From Brookdale Senior Living: *"The residents loved your performance, your costumes, everything."* **Jenna**, the young lady in charge, was full of praise and very cooperative. We already have a date set for 2023: Saturday, 1 pm on March 25, 2023.

Thanks to all who came and did such a great job.

ADE made it into the St. Paul Pioneer Press

WATCH: Catch the Armenian Dance Ensemble of Minnesota. 1 p.m. and 2:30 p.m. @ Cosgrove Stage, outside the Education Building (also performing at same times on Monday, Aug. 29)
[View on Website](#)

I would like to send you all a very heartfelt THANK YOU for your participation in our Diversity Day Event at the Minneapolis Veterans Affairs! It truly was a refreshing and awesome day compiled with awesome people!!!

Angela W., U.S. Army (Retired)

The Armenian Dance Ensemble has been representing Armenian Culture through Dance and Music for over 25 years. If you have an interest in Armenian dance, if you have danced in the past, or have never danced but really would like to learn and participate, this would be a good time to give it a try. All the dances are taught, and costumes provided. It is a volunteer activity and we only ask for your time commitment. Rehearsals are typically held on Sundays at 1:00 pm in person. Remember: you do not need to be Armenian to become a member of the dance group, just a desire to learn and enjoy Armenian music and dance.

A Note To Remember For In-Person Performances: if you wish to perform with the group, you need to purchase your own "character shoes" and be ready to wear makeup and perform without eyeglasses.

ACOM 2022 PAID MEMBERS

- Andeweg, George, Jeanne
- Aram, Connie & George
- Aroutiunian, Margarita; Usitalo, Steven
- Arslan, Arnold
- Asgian, Phil
- Baradaran-Cafesjian, Kathleen, Jaff
- Bulbulian, Francis, Barbara
- Charchian, Aram, Ruth
- Daniels, Kathleen; Myers, Marcie, Mari
- Digris, Naïry; McGibbon, Terry & Hassetts
- Erikcson, Cynthia, Leroy
- Esaybegyan, Anna, Sergey
- Favre, Margaret, Jim
- Gauro, Boghos, Lana
- Gildensoph, Lynne
- Gregorian, Laurel
- Hajinian, Peter, Brooke & family
- Hakobyan, Artur; Papyieva, Nina & family
- Hayes, Adrienne
- Izmirian, Peter
- Johnson, Andrea, Lowell
- Kelegian, Der Yeprem, Judy
- Keljik, Mark; Grantz, Caren
- Keljik, Jeff, Susan
- Keljik, Tom; Collins, Jennifer
- Kourajian, Art
- Matossian, Lou Ann
- Meketarian, Martin, Mara & family
- Mesrobian, Azad, Karen
- Ohannesian, Judy; Tiffany, Doug
- Plummer, Elizabeth
- Poritsky, Joan
- Rith-Najarian, Janet, Steve
- Savayan, Peka, Maria & Stephen A.
- Scallen, Chacké, Steve
- Vaubel, Kass, Carol, Jamaica P.
- Warner, Beth
- Wells, Annie B; Ritchie, Molly
- Wiersbeck, Mark
- Wiersbeck, Sarah
- Ylitalo, Caroline, David & family

If you have not yet renewed your membership, and would like to do so, please use the form on the back of the Newsletter to mail your check. Let us know if you are interested in receiving a copy of the Board Member biographies. Email your request to:

hyebar@yahoo.com

ARMENIAN CULTURAL ORGANIZATION OF MINNESOTA — ACOM

MISSION STATEMENT



- 1) To provide programs and events which encourage its members to learn Armenian culture, language, history and heritage.
- 2) To provide programs of Armenian culture, language, history and heritage for the general Minnesota area.
- 3) To provide an environment which encourages participation of all Armenians, their relations and friends who have an interest in Armenian culture, regardless of religious, political or social differences, and to promote harmony among its members.
- 4) To provide periodic gatherings and meetings for the cultural furtherance of the Armenian people, their relations and friends who have an interest in Armenian culture within the general Minnesota area.

CONSTITUTION

The Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota (ACOM) preserves and promotes Armenian culture, language, history and heritage in Minnesota and the upper Midwest. Founded in 1980 and headquartered in St. Paul, ACOM is the oldest and largest Armenian organization in the state.

ACOM welcomes everyone, regardless of ethnic, religious, or political affiliation, who takes an interest in Armenia and Armenians. Our members include first-generation through fourth-generation Minnesota Armenians, their families, and non-Armenian friends of the community.

ACOM's numerous cultural and social events include Armenian dance parties (Gaghant), guest speakers, folk dance lessons and performances by the Armenian Dance Ensemble of Minnesota, Genocide commemorations, summer picnics, and series of Interviews of Presenters talking about their heritage. ACOM also sponsors all Armenian activities at the International Institute's Festival of Nations, a major regional folk festival held annually in St. Paul. Minnesota Armenians were founding participants in 1932; today, the Festival is ACOM's most visible public venue.

As an independent, 501 (c)3 non-profit organization, ACOM is supported primarily by membership dues and private donations. Gifts to ACOM are tax-deductible to the extent permissible by law.



ACOM MEMBERSHIP RENEWAL FORM

Valid January 1 to December 31, 2023

Name: _____

Street: _____

Phone: () - - E-Mail Address: _____

Household Membership \$35.00
Includes all members of one household

Out Of State..... \$15.00
(Newsletter Only)

Contributing..... \$100.00

Comments: _____

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Nairy Digris, Treasurer
1703 Skillman Ave. W.
Roseville, MN 55113

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1703 Skillman Avenue West

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We're on the Web

www.mnarmenians.org