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Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota
Established 1980

MinneHyeLites

No. 169 Fall 2024

HAPPY
Anniversary

SAVE THE DATE

ACOM TURNS 45 IN FEBRUARY !!!

Help us celebrate this milestone event at
Gaghant, the annual celebration
of Armenian Christmas and New Year

MARK YOUR CALENDARS

Saturday, January 11, 2025, 6 pm

Location: Center for Performing Arts
3754 Pleasant Avenue South
Minneapolis, MN 55409

The CFPA is owned by long-time
ACOM Member/Supporter,

Jackie Hayes



ACOM WEBSITE

Remember to continue to check our website:
www.mnarmenians.org

FROM OUR MAIL BAG

These are notes sent by folks who get the ACOM Newsletter.

THANK YOU

Lowell and I thoroughly enjoyed Kathleen's and Gina's fascinating presentation on their "dancing-hiking-eating" tour around Armenia (September 22, 2024). We really got a sense of the wonderful range of experiences they had in all kinds of settings as they soaked up Armenia's ancient and contemporary culture and the Armenian people's famous hospitality. We just wish we could have gone along! Thank you, Gina and Kathleen, for all the time you put into creating a lovely program for us, and, as well, for baking the Armenian cookies and gata, which were delicious!

Andrea and Lowell Johnson

Dear Nairy and all of the ACOM Board,
 Thank you very much for the gift of chocolates and the condolences for my mother-in-law's death. Marcie and I really appreciate them both! Even though we knew she was not doing well, it is still hard when they are gone. We all miss Judy so much, but are ever thankful for the kind words and support from our friends, and chocolate is wonderful for adding that moment of sweetness to our days!

Thanks again,

Kathleen Daniels & Marcie Daniels

Simon and I would like to express our gratitude to ACOM, for the words of kindness and a sweet treat of chocolates.

Liana Martirosyan Brouillard & Simon Martirosyan

Today I received the beautiful note and kind donation from ACOM. Thank you ACOM Board for the support and ongoing belief in the work we are doing in Armenia.

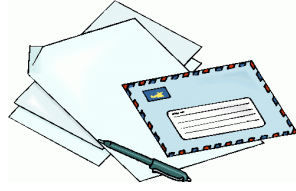
We strive to address the needs of so many, when the needs are so widespread.

If anyone has any questions or ideas for AYI, please share my contact info.

I do have an idea to honor Azad Mesrobian's legacy, that may take a little work, but I will try.

Thanks again,

Marty & Mara Meketarian, AYI



ARMENIAN DANCE ENSEMBLE (ADE)

In September, Gina and Kathleen, ADE members, gave a presentation on their dance tour to Armenia, and they added a little dance instruction to the afternoon.

On the weekend of November 1-3, an Armenian Choreographer/Instructor, Sevag Avakian, Sassoun Dance Ensemble from Toronto, came to Tapestry Folkdance Center in Minneapolis for a workshop featuring Armenian Dance. Attendance was wonderful both from the ADE members and from the International dancers from many parts of the upper Midwest.

Gina Bonsignore, long time Armenian Dance Ensemble member, writes:

"My husband Rick's great-great-aunt (his dad's great-aunt) was a missionary to Armenia at the turn of the 20th century. See the link below to learn more about this remarkable lady who helped found a school. She lived through the massacre at Kessab. I found out about her through a relative who is a keen history buff."

[Miss Chambers - The Beloved Missionary in Kessab - Keghart](#)

You and your group were a hit! All of the residents really enjoyed your dancing. Thank you!

Rosie B.

Presbyterian Homes

ADE was invited once again to perform at the MN State Fair this year. Eleven members of the group danced on the Cosgrove Stage by the Education building on Saturday, August 24th at 10, 11 and 12. Other than a brief narration and explanation of the background of each dance, the group has made it a habit to regularly invite audience members to join them on stage and teach them a simple Armenian line dance. This has been a very successful tradition for ADE as we always have a large number of participants from the audience who are interested and brave enough to take that leap.

Most interesting this year was meeting an Armenian mom and daughter, originally from Syria, now living in Los Angeles, who happened to be in the Twin Cities for work, and who were ecstatic to have accidentally run into an Armenian group at the Fair, especially doing Armenian dances. In spite of the huge number of Armenians in Los Angeles, they indicated that they did not have an organized group such as ours who went out to perform and carry on the Armenian culture through music and dance.

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ADE folks, I am very proud of each and every one of you. Thanks !

SYMPATHY

Kathleen Daniels, ACOM Secretary, on the passing of her mother-in-law June 14, 2024.

Raisa Martirosyan (born March 22nd, 1938 in Pyatigorsk, Russia), passed away on July 2nd, 2024 at Abbot Northwestern hospital in Minneapolis, MN surrounded by her family.

Raisa was a cherished mother, grandmother, aunt, and friend. During the years when Raisa was in better health she was an active member of St. Sahag Armenian Church. She got immense joy from making baked goods for various events at church throughout the years.

This is a tremendous loss for her family here in Minneapolis, as well as in her home country.

Service was officiated by Fr. Sahak Kaishian on Saturday, July 13, 2024 at 203 Howell Street, St Paul.

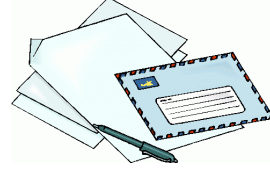
CONGRATULATIONS GO TO:

Kat Keljik on her new job effective April 1, 2024. Kat joined the 106 Group as a Senior Project Manager in April after 3 years with the Minnesota Historical Society (MNHS). 106 Group provides cultural resource consulting services and helps manage projects of archaeological and historic value all across the US. Kat is excited to work with this small and dynamic team of professionals as she continues to focus on preservation of heritage across the region. In this new role, Kat continues to work with teams of archaeologists, historians, designers, and city planners. She will also draw on her experience in heritage preservation, community engagement, and her passion for accessibility. We are thrilled that she will also continue as ACOM Board President.

On April 13, 2024, **Andy Ylitalo** and **Anahid Tefeyan** were engaged to be married at Holy Martyrs Armenian Apostolic Church in Long Island, NY. They were engaged in the Armenian tradition through the “nshandook” ceremony, meaning the “giving of signs.” In addition to the usual rings, Andy and Anahid exchanged the most powerful sign in the Christian tradition, the Holy Cross, and now wear Armenian cross necklaces as signs of their engagement. The ceremony was a small gathering and was followed by a lobster dinner at a nearby restaurant. Andy and Anahid will be married in 2025.

GET WELL

We recently heard that **Sarah Wiersbeck** had a fall during the last week of October. Her son Mark took her to ER where they spent the entire day on Thursday and learned she had two fractured ribs. She's been home recovering and Mark is staying with her to help out. It's mainly pain management and resting to let the ribs heal over the next several weeks. All in all, she was very fortunate. She didn't hit her head; her hip and spine are ok, but she has a big bruise. We hope she'll be ok in the long run, but it could've been a lot worse. Thankful it wasn't. She was trying to take off a slipper in the garage standing up and lost her balance. Ouch!



WHO IS YARA?

YARA SHAHIDI is an American actress and producer who has been active in the entertainment industry since she was six years old. Born in Minneapolis, she is the granddaughter of Mark Keljik, a past President of ACOM.

Yara is best known for her starring role as Zoey Johnson in the ABC sitcom “Black-ish” and its spinoff series “Grownish”.

Some of her notable works include

Films:

Imagine That 2009

Butter 2011

Alex Cross 2012

The Sun is Also a Star 2019

Peter Pan and Wendy 2023

Television:

Black-ish

Grownish

Yara has received several awards and nominations, including multiple NAACP Image Awards. She is also known for her activism, particularly in the area of voting rights and education. She founded the organization *Eighteen X 18* and has performed with other organizations to promote social justice.

Yara is a 2022 graduate of Harvard University. She enjoys her return visits to Minnesota to spend time with her family – Mark and Caren Keljik, Barbara Clarke, Tom and Jennifer Keljik, and Jeff and Susan Keljik.



Gomidas Bust Unveiled in Watertown, MA

Click on the link below (or copy and paste) to go to the article.

<https://mirrorspectator.com/2024/11/16/gomidas-bust-unveiled-in-watertown/>

OUR COMMUNITY MEMBERS ARE TRAVELING !

DANCE ENSEMBLE MEMBERS, GINA AND KATHLEEN, TRAVEL TO ARMENIA!

Two members of the Armenian Dance Ensemble, Gina Bonsignore and Kathleen Daniels (also an ACOM Board member) had the wonderful opportunity to go on a dance and culture tour to Armenia this past May. The tour was organized and led by Tineke VanGeel, an international folk dance teacher from the Netherlands, who has a special interest in and love for Armenia. In 2006 Tineke received a special honor from the Armenian Ministry of Culture and Youth for her work promoting Armenian dance, music, and culture.

For almost three weeks, they traveled throughout Armenia, beginning in Yerevan, to Haghpat in the north, then heading south to Dilijan and along Lake Sevan, to Goris in the south, then returning to Yerevan. In all, they visited 8 of the 10 present day provinces.

Their tour was quite active - they had dance classes, spent many days hiking through breathtaking scenery, and toured many historical and cultural sites. Fortunately, with all the activity, they were also well fed, with delicious and plentiful food and drink! They also were able to meet with several local dance groups, along with other people who were working to keep arts and traditions alive. Here are some of the highlights of what they experienced.

Yerevan

Their tour began with five days in Yerevan, where they stayed near the central Republic Square, and were able to easily walk to many of the cultural attractions. They visited the Cascade and the Cafesjian Center for the Arts (where Gina claimed Gerard Cafesjian as a Minnesotan!), the evening fountain light and music show at Republic Square, the History Museum and the National Art Gallery, along with other individual adventures.



Tour group at the top of the Cascade.

Cafesjian Center for the Arts

Mount Ararat as seen from the 9th floor of their hotel, on a clear day!

They had three days of dance and singing instruction from an enthusiastic yet patient local dance instructor, Mery Levonyan, a member of Masunq folk



song and dance ensemble. They learned eight dances from different regions of past and present Armenia, and the songs for three of them, Tamzara, Deriko, and Jumlamer. Most fun memory: the whole group of dancers making the sound of cranes (birds) and ducking into the middle of the circle in the dance Krunkaver!



Left Dance classes with Mery, in the Ani Grand Hotel, Yerevan. Below Left Sight-seeing in Republic Square, with tour organizer Tineke.



Historical sightseeing

While based in Yerevan, they met their guide, Naira, and their driver Armand, whose combined skills helped them experience much of the entire country. They traveled to the Geghard Monastery, a UNESCO World Heritage site, with a chapel dating back to the 12th century. They also visited Garni

Temple. dating from before the adoption of Christianity in Armenia, it was dedicated to the sun god. It was a very different architectural style from many of the other monasteries they visited, with a front of Ionic columns. Much of it had to be rebuilt after earthquake damage in the 1600s.

Visiting Garni Temple



They then left Yerevan and traveled to the northern part of Armenia, Haghpat. On their way there they stopped to view the Armenian Stone Alphabet - all 39

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letters in a huge display.
Left

Walking through the alphabet!

As they traveled, Gina and Kathleen came across many animals that often seemed to wander pretty freely! Cattle, pigs, horses, goats, and especially sheep! The sheep were being herded along the road, and they were

accompanied by herders, sheep dogs, goats and at least one donkey.



The sheep own the road when they come through! Later in the tour they traveled to Amberd fortress (“the fortress of the clouds”) and the Areni cave, where the oldest leather shoe had been found, along with the earliest known winery. The Areni Cave is still an active archaeological site, but has been opened to tourists as well.



Left: **Remains of the ancient winery in Areni Cave**

One of the 204 stones with holes in a circular arrangement, near the town of Sisian, believed to have been an observatory, dating back to roughly 1000 BC.

Many of the monasteries and other ancient sites they visited had incredible views!

The ruins of Kobayr, dating from the 12th and 13th centuries, are located fairly close to the city of Vanadzor. Smataberd fortress, founded in the 5th century overlooks two valleys.



More recent history was not ignored on this tour. They toured a village abandoned (not voluntarily) during the Soviet days - Heen (Old) Khot. It was a poignant day -

They saw families still attending their animals in old pasture lands where the buildings lay in ruins and a cemetery told its own stories.



Kathleen had the exciting experience of barreling down to the village of Old Khot (dubbed the Armenian Machu Picchu) on a rubble strewn road in a Soviet era jeep while Gina hoofed it, barely making it



back up to the top. Toward the end of the trip they stayed in Goris, very near the border of Azerbaijan. Their guide, Naira, gave them a very frank and personal account of the Nagorno-Karabakh war and its

devastating impact.

Their hotel hosts were providing a home for two young boys from the region, representative of the more than 100,000 Armenians that fled to the Republic of Armenia.



Artisans

Our tour included stops at a number of inspiring producers of food, drink, and art. The creativity and resilience that was on display among these practitioners was heart-

ening, especially when they were able to try their own hands at one of them (Hint = Gata making!)

They visited a modern-day winery in the town of Ashtarak, where they were able to taste (and buy)

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some of the locally-made wines. The Yeganyans winery does not export their wines, as they are able to sell all they produce within Armenia. Many of the group members left with bottles that they corked and labeled themselves.



Above: **Explanation of the wine-making process**

Right, **happily leaving with their local wines!**

The following day, they visited a local bakery where they learned (as a group) how to make the delicious sweet bread, gata.

It contains madzun, a fermented milk similar to yogurt. Once prepared, a design is pressed into the top of the round bread. Their efforts were followed by lunch, when they were able to taste their results for dessert!



Left: **Ready to start baking!**

Kathleen and Gina traveled to Vanadzor to meet an 80-year-old stone master, and they were able to see his studio and hear from him what the process of making khachkars is like.



Left: **Stone master in his studio**

Near the end of their stay, they visited a second local winery in Areni village, where they also were able to sample mulberry vodka. It was an incredibly strong drink, but they did manage some toasts!

Local Dance Groups

They visited Zolakar village where they were able to tour a private house in the old style, dating back to the 19th century. The owner had preserved it, as it had been his home until a newer, modern style house could be built. The village had a surprise for them after lunch - a performance by a youth dance group. After they performed, they invited the travelers to dance with them up on the stage!

Below: **Outside the building housing the performance stage in Zolakar village**

In Hermon village, they had 2 more dance classes with local teacher Dadik Martirosyan, followed by a performance by one of the youth dance groups that he leads. They were impressed with the graceful



hand movements of the young women dancers, inspiring them to do work more on theirs!



Left: **Dancers in Hermon village**



Dadik leading some of our group dancers at Lucy Resort, Hermon village

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The last group they visited was another youth group in Talin. They had a delectable meal, and again were able to practice Armenian toasting habits with more local wine and vodka. The group performed dances and also invited them to dance with them.



Left: **Youth dance group in Talin Ethnic Minority Communities**

As part of learning more about the cultures in present day Armenia, they visited two ethnic minority communities, the Russian-speaking Molokans and the Yazidis.

On their way to Dilijan, they stopped to have lunch in one of the Molokan villages. They heard about how they were persecuted in Russia, due to their religious beliefs, but that they felt welcome in Armenia. In a very funny modern day moment, they asked their hostess (through the interpreter), what they thought of the incursion of cell phones into their somewhat isolated village. She answered with a thumbs-down, but about a minute later, when someone asked a different question, she pulled out her cell phone to answer!! They all laughed in recognition!

The other community, a Yazidi village, had a very modern temple next to an ancient graveyard. They were welcomed by the religious leader, who took us inside the temple and explained a bit about their beliefs. The community had a similar history of religious persecution elsewhere, but a welcome in Armenia. The leader explained that while the temple had imagery of the sun and peacocks, that was not what they worship, but rather God who made all. In a very touching moment two young teenage boys came up to him and bowed their heads to receive a blessing, something that is apparently common for community members to do every day.

Also, despite his very traditional clothing, once when they were outside the temple, the leader did pull out... a cell phone! (they're everywhere!)



The Yazidi religious leader above, inside the temple. Right: Sun imagery inside the temple.



FOOD!

Throughout the tour, they were surrounded by delicious and plentiful food. They ate together as a group most often for dinner, but sometimes also for lunch. Every meal, including breakfast, seemed to have some variation on cucumber and tomato salad. In addition, other fresh chopped vegetable salads were also served (one surprising favorite was a grated beet salad in a sauce, topped with pomegranate seeds.) In general, fresh vegetables were always served in some form.

Main dishes included meats, kabobs, dolma made with grilled vegetables in addition to grape leaves; and especially in the Lake Sevan area, fish.



It seemed they had arrived at the peak of strawberry and cherry season. The strawberries were so flavorful and ripe, Kathleen vowed to never buy the grocery store version in the USA again (well, that didn't last, but they really were the best ever!)

Left: **The bounty!**

Final impressions

Neither Gina nor Kathleen had ever visited Armenia before, so it was hard to know what to expect. Starting with five days in Yerevan was helpful,

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since it was a lot like other big cities in many ways. Crossing the streets was a little challenging (they tended to wait for Armenians to cross before stepping out there.)

People were friendly and helpful for the most part, and everyone did seem to know a little English, especially in Yerevan. They did their best with the small amount of Armenian they learned before traveling. Gina was determined to learn the alphabet, and bought some kids' books to review.

Once out in the rural areas, the biggest impression was that Armenia is an astoundingly beautiful country. There were multiple days where they hiked through gorgeous scenery, eating lunch near waterfalls, crossing over a gorge on a swinging bridge, visiting ruins. While it was not the focus of the trip, several of the group members (including both of them) had a great time trying to identify the local birds and flowers.

A poignant moment came at one of the hotels where they had danced after dinner the night before (just as a group, not a lesson), and a young woman came up to Tineke and thanked her for dancing with traditional music, keeping the older ways alive. In the villages where they met the local dance groups, they were surprised how full of young people the dance groups were. So, it seems the traditions are continuing in multiple ways.

For Kathleen, she fell in love with Armenia, her beauty, resilience, and contrasts. Everywhere they looked, the "new" was rising up right next to the old, or even ancient. Standing in a panorama of green hills and distant mountains brought an indescribable feeling of timelessness. Shnorhakalut'yun!



Mother Armenia statue in Yerevan.

Beatrice Ohanessian Tribute October 20, 2024

By: Phil Asgjan



Beatrice was born and grew up in the Armenian community in Baghdad, Iraq. Her performing career started around age 12. Educated at London's Royal Academy of Music and at The Juilliard School in New York, Beatrice was pianist for the Iraqi Symphony Orchestra for over 30 years.

While studying at Juilliard, Beatrice was introduced to Alan Hovhaness, American composer of Armenian and Scottish heritage. She became a champion of Hovhaness's music.

Beatrice enjoyed an international performing career and was recognized by the Iraqi Ministry of Culture as a national treasure of Iraq. She first came to Minnesota in 1969 to teach at the University of Minnesota and Macalester College; later she also taught for many years at the University of St. Thomas. Beatrice enjoyed a long time association with Schubert Club and her Steinway piano, a gift from the people of Iraq, is now part of the musical instrument collection, housed at Landmark Center and used regularly in their recital hall.

We are very grateful to the rich resources of Schubert Club which collaborated with ACOM to put on the tribute to Beatrice and to St. Sahag Armenian Church in St. Paul for their support. The event began with words from Der Yeprem, retired priest from Racine who knew the Ohanessian family, followed by a traditional Middle Eastern dinner and a program led by Schubert Club Artistic and Executive Director, Barry Kempton, followed by selected readings by local author and former Director of Education for Schubert Club, Holly Windle, who wrote *Baghdad Barcarolle*, a biography of Beatrice's life. We then heard a performance by pianist Roderick Kettlewell, of one of Beatrice's compositions from the manuscript collection at Schubert Club. The program ended with archival recordings of Beatrice performing and discussing her career from a Schubert Club concert in St. Paul.

Beatrice is buried at Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis, and her grave site is one of the regularly scheduled stops on tours offered by Lakewood guides.



AZAD MESROBIAN

October 9, 1944 — August 21, 2024, St. Peter, MN



Azad Mesrobian, age 79, of St. Peter, died on Wednesday, August 21, 2024.

Visitation was held at 10 am on Saturday, September 7 at Christ The King church in Mankato, followed by an 11 am service. A Celebration of Life was held on Friday, September 6, from 5 – 7 pm at Northview Mortuary in

North Mankato.

Azad was born in an Armenian refugee camp in Aleppo, Syria on October 9, 1944, to Harotoun and Mary Mesrobian. His parents, fleeing violent deportation from Turkey following the Armenian genocide in 1918, settled in the refugee camp, married, and started a family there. The youngest of four children, Azad's siblings were Sam, Ara, and Lucine. Azad was named by his father; his name means "free" in Armenian.

Azad graduated from Aleppo College in 1964 and then emigrated to the United States that same year, following the trail set by his siblings. He attended Minnesota State College, Mankato, and South Dakota State University in Brookings South Dakota, earning a bachelor's degree in electrical engineering.

He moved to Minnesota and started his career at Electric Machinery in North Minneapolis. In 1969, he married Karen Lawton, and they had two daughters, Kristin and Carrie. The family later moved to Mankato in 1980, where he worked as Engineering Manager for Kato Engineering. A licensed professional engineer, Azad worked for many other companies on power generation issues as an employee or consultant. He was dedicated to his work and traveled the globe for it. But his work was always in service of his wife and family; he always missed them when he was away and preferred to travel in their company.

Azad was always busy. In 1999, he and Karen moved out to the country, where they built a house on seventeen acres, a source of happiness for him. He liked to putter around his property, split logs, collect maple syrup, read books, sit around the fire, help his wife with her multiple gardens, and have his children and grandchildren come to visit. Since he had never known his grandparents, his relationship with his own grandchildren was very important; he wrote each of them letters every week, telling them his thoughts and stories of his own youth. He loved being with them and would do anything for them: bring them up north for summer trips, take them swimming whenever he had the chance, attend their school plays, sports events, and concerts.

He was a prolific writer who wrote letters to his family and friends and newspapers as well as a full-length memoir about his life and many essays about his travels. He never returned to Aleppo, but he was able to visit Armenia later in life with his wife, children, and grandchildren multiple times.

A generous man, Azad always held those in need close to his heart, giving often to charitable causes and individuals going through tough times. A proud Armenian, he commemorated the Armenian genocide every April 24 and was always in solidarity with those who had suffered similarly across the globe, whether it was from political violence or natural disasters. Throughout his life, he donated to many Armenian initiatives, most recently the resettlement of refugees from the Nagorno-Karabakh (Artsakh) region. Having been an international student and immigrant himself, he liked to befriend international students from Minnesota State University, Mankato and he was active in the Armenian Cultural Organization of Minnesota, where he served as President, helped with the Gaghanat New Year's celebration, and attended the Armenian Book Club (where you could hear his complaints about the selected books frequently).

Azad was a hilarious guy who made people laugh, sometimes unintentionally, with his off-the-cuff observations. He was a frugal and humble man, who would go around in stained old clothes unless Karen stepped in and threw them out. He was the kind of man who always picked up the check and never wanted to leave anyone out. He loved good food and taught his family, including his grandchildren, to make favorite foods from his early years: lahmajun, dolma, sarma, hummos, tabouli, and falafel, just to name a few. He didn't have a lot of leisure hobbies but would do anything Karen wanted to do: see movies, travel back to South Dakota where she was from, visit her relatives in Norway, go to endless museums, accompany her to buy clothes (he claimed he held a world record of sitting for dressing room waiting areas) and buy her ice cream when she wanted something sweet.

Azad is survived by his wife, Karen, of St. Peter, Minnesota; his two daughters, Kristin Mesrobian (Jeff Johnson) and Carrie Mesrobian (Adrian Durand) of Columbia Heights, Minnesota; sister, Lucine Ishkanian (Krikor) of Chicago; sisters-in-law, Sylvia Mesrobian of St. Paul, Arpie Mesrobian of Toronto, and Roxanne Gilbert (Cal) of Loxley, Alabama; brother-in-law, Ralph David Lawton (Annette) of St. Paul, Minnesota; nephews, George and Jack Ishkanian (Argelia) of Chicago, Illinois, Scott Mesrobian of Champlin, Minnesota, and Allen Mesrobian of Toronto; nieces, Sheree Mazzaresse (Dave) and Rosie

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Popywycz (George) of Toronto, Kaia Lawton and Justine Grandel (Jonny) of St. Paul, Minnesota; grandnieces Johanna and Jacqueline Ishkanian of Chicago, Illinois, Paige Mazzaresse of Phoenix, Arizona and Sarah Mazzaresse of Stillwater, Minnesota; grandchildren, Sidian and Owen Johnson of Minneapolis, Minnesota and Matilda Durand-Mesrobian of Columbia Heights, Minnesota; honorary daughter Anahit Apinyan (Khazhak Ghazaryan) of Dilijan, Ar-

menia; and numerous cousins and friends. Azad was preceded in death by his brothers Sam and Ara Mesrobian; his parents, Mary and Haroutoun, his in-laws, Gerald and Selma Lawton, and his childhood friend from kindergarten, Zaven Khanjian. In lieu of flowers, memorials can be sent to the Armenian Youth Initiative here.

meketarian@comcast.net



JACKIE HAYES & THE CENTER FOR PERFORMING ARTS

Wind Mouse Cherries Wind

A performance installation took place in the Center for Performing Arts Blackbox. July 19 and 20th at 7pm. Created by Jackie Hayes with vocalist Natalie Nowytski and dancer-choreographer Kerry Parker.

The installation was an exploration of the legacy and impact of genocide denial. In the face of ongoing ethnic cleansing of many cultures, in many homelands, including Jackie's own Armenian culture, how does one activate hope and possibility in the face of perpetrator denial, untrustworthy and unreliable resources, and generational trauma? How does one conduct daily living so that joy, rage, and activism all have a place?

Jackie's work over the past several years has been designed to create experiences where the audience composes their own narrative, their own relationship to what's offered in the room. This piece is an immersive installation where the performance happens throughout the performance space. In collaboration with artist Kerry Parker, this piece investigates a new choreographic process based on symbols and chance. In the context of found sound and texts, the piece also includes a vocal exploration of desire performed by Natalie Nowytski.

jackiehayesprojects.com

A DELICIOUS APPLE A DAY

Food writer Holly Ebel says as we hit apple harvesting season, there are some great options for this formerly forbidden fruit.

By: *Holly Ebel, September 11, 2024*

We can get apples year-round but they're never quite as crunchy, juicy and flavorful as they are right now. This is the season that will likely run until early November, depending on the weather. However you use them — just eating, packing into lunches, baking, salads, applesauce — there are many varieties to choose from, all with their own unique texture and taste.

Check around grocery stores, local farm and roadside stands, farmers markets and maybe even go to a local orchard to pick, you have many choices though most of us have our favorites. Right now baking is how many are being used, with apple pie leading the baking charge.

Jayne Pompeian of Rochester is known as an accomplished baker and right now is using apples in



a variety of recipes, beginning the season with what else? Apple pie. When I stopped by to see her recently about what plans she had for apples, she had just pulled an apple pie out of the oven. (I didn't turn down a piece when she offered.) A simple two-crust version, it was delicious.

"I've been making this recipe for years and the only apples I use are Granny Smiths," Pompeian says. "They are one of my favorites when I bake. They hold their shape and bring that wonderful apple flavor." (Her recipe is included below.)

The recipe for pie was just one of many she uses. Her collection of both recipes and cookbooks is impressive. There were two old recipe boxes, one from her mother, another from her grandmother, with most

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recipes hand-written. Others were from regional cookbooks as well as a huge binder so full she could barely close it.

Pompeian and her late husband, Ed, are the founders of the **Gift of Life Transplant House**, now celebrating 40 years. One of her favorite recipes is for an apple crisp that came from a long-time resident there that she had befriended.

"I think of her every time I make it." Jayne's interest in baking came from both of her grandmothers. A native of Red Wing, she was lucky to have both nearby. "I would love to watch, help and then sit in front of the oven window and watch what happened."

As a result, baking is something she's always enjoyed and, in fact, in high school she won the Betty Crocker Award.

"No big deal," she says. When considering what apples to use for pies, tarts or crisps, choose an apple that holds its shape and has a balance of

sweet and tart. While she uses Granny Smiths, a great choice, other bakers mix it up with Golden Delicious, Haralson's and Honeycrisp as well. Actually use whatever you like or have on hand. Full stop.

Fuji apples tend to be too juicy while Red Delicious lack flavor. The question is to peel or not to peel. While leaving the peel adds color and it may keep the apples from melding together as they bake. Peeling also makes for a softer filling. Many bakers combine two to three varieties to bring a more complex flavor and texture but at the end of the day it is

the baker's choice.

Old-fashioned apple pie



- 2 cups flour
- 1 teaspoon salt
- 1/2 teaspoon baking powder
- 2/3 cup solid vegetable shortening
- 6 tablespoons cold water
- 4-6 cups sliced, pared tart apples
- 3/4 to 1 cup sugar
- 1 teaspoon cinnamon
- 1 tablespoon flour

Mix flour, salt, baking powder and shortening together with a pastry blender until crumbly. Add water, mix together and form into a ball. Divide in half. Roll out one half and reserve other for the top crust. Roll out crust and place in a 9-inch pie plate. Mix sugar, cinnamon and flour together. Save out half and mix the rest with the apples. Pour apples into the pie plate. Pour rest of sugar mixture over the apples. Roll out the rest of the crust and place on top of apples. Pinch crusts together. Sprinkle top with sugar. Prick crust with a fork. Bake at 425 for 30 minutes, then lower heat to 350 and bake 25-30 minutes more until golden brown.



ACOM BOOK CLUB Changing Structure and Planning



With the untimely passing of Board President and Book Club Leader, Azad Mesrobian, and with Leroy Erickson's stepping back

from leading the book club for the next year, Francis Bulbulian will take on the leadership role. The group that met to discuss going forward (Kassian, Francis, Andrea and the Favres) proposed the following:

- They will meet on the 3rd Thursday of each month, the default location will be Mim's Cafe (occasionally in someone's home.)
- They will stick to books related to Armenia and Armenian authors, and will announce the titles at

least one month in advance.

- There will be one more meeting where people bring book suggestions for future dates.

ACTION: Please look for an email from Kassian with the new details. This will go out to the ACOM membership list.



Trip to India by Tom Keljik

Okay guys, what's our next great adventure? Sitting with the Singhs over a Caribou Coffee, we learned they were planning a trip to India. Wow, we never ranked India high on our travel plan list. Jasbir, born in Malaysia of Indian parents and his wife Frances have been our travel buddies- Vietnam, Russia, Iceland, Egypt, Australia and NOW India. The trip was planned by Audley Travel - a British company with an office in Boston. Count us in!

The trip was structured on two circular routes centered in northwestern India. Given that my wife - Jennifer was scheduled to attend the College of American Pathologist meeting in Montreal (I accompanied her), we would be delayed a week and would have to catch the Singhs midstream in their vacation.

Before divulging details of our trip, I feel obligated to share a quick overview of Indian history, religion, and its people.

India has the largest population in the world - one and a half billion. What is amazing is that India is only a third of the size of the United States (remember, we also count Alaska) and we have but 339 million people!

Hindus dominate with nearly 80%, followed by Muslims - 14%, Christians - 4.9%, Sikhs - 1.8%, and a smattering of Jains and Buddhist. It should be noted that religious strife caused the separation of majority Muslim populations in the North and South into West and East Pakistan as the British were exiting India in 1947. It is estimated that between 14 to 18 million people migrated across the borders while over a million perished in violent clashes.

India's official language is Hindi with great numbers of English speaking people. Officially there are 22 recognized languages.

Indian history is replete with multiple invasions and conquests. One of the world's first civilizations was founded in the Indus Valley around 2600 BC. Around 320 BC, Alexander the Great invaded and conquered the region. The Guptas ruled India and promoted Hinduism, followed by Persian, Islamic, Turkic, Afghan and the Mughal empire. European seafaring incursions began in the 15th century - Dutch, French, and of course the British through their East India Company. Eventually India, with the help of Mahatma Gandhi freed itself of foreign dominance.

We arrived in New Delhi and were met by our guide and driver and delivered to our hotel. That night we participated in a street food walk sampling many edibles. It was our initiation into the hustle and bustle of India. Crowded, colorful, delicious and a bit

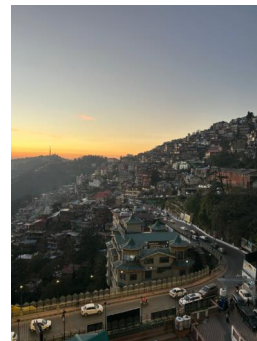
dangerous with people, rickshaws, tuk-tuks, motorcycles, mules, cows and dogs all trying to occupy the same space. The next several days we spent in New Delhi, a city devised by the British on a grand scale requiring the destruction of some 28 villages surrounding Old Delhi to accommodate the new city. It is quite the contrast with the old.

Here is a peek of a Delhi street scene.



The second leg of expedition took us to the Delhi train station. It was here that we met up with the Singhs having completed their Golden Triangle swing to the South. We would spend the day by rail. Halfway, we transferred to the British-built 1905 vintage toy train - sporting a narrow gauge rail. It was built to shuttle Brits to the coolness of the foothills of the Himalayas where the city of Shimla took shape. After experiencing a massive traffic jam of three hours we were transported to the beautiful Wildflower Hotel perched in a cedar forest at 8,000 feet elevation with a bird's-eye view of the village below. It was situated on the site of Lord Kitchener's India home. After several days in lovely Shimla, we hit the winding roads (no straight stretch more than 100 feet!) on our way to Palampur.

Here is a view of Shimla as we were leaving. Every structure tightly hugs the road and sheer mountain slope.



Palampur is where the Dalai Lama and thousands of his followers left Tibet upon the full Chinese takeover. Here we visited Tashijong - a Buddhist monastery with hundreds of monks in their orange garb. Later that night, we arrived in Dharmsala and to our hotel overlooking the residence of his holiness. Later that day, our guide took us a walking tour of the city neighborhoods. We saw small areas of small gardens, along with cows, dogs and monkeys roaming everywhere. Our guide mentioned that women do all the heavy work in the fields.

Yes, that's the Dalai Lama ! =>

Off to Amritsar in the Punjab. A quick check-in to the hotel and we were off for what is known as the Putting to Bed Ceremony at the Sikh Golden Temple. Every evening the holy book of Adi Garth is returned to its sacred place. Late that afternoon, we left



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for a journey to the Pakistani border for the Closing of the Boarder Ceremony. (Imagine having such a ceremony at the Mexican and Canadian border crossings.)

The following day was dedicated to visiting the

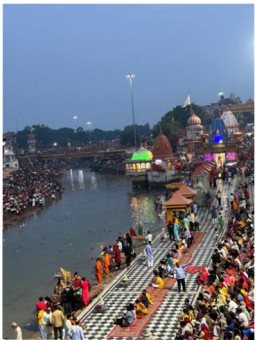


Golden Temple to partake in a meal that is typically served to over one hundred thousand people daily. Here is a photo of Jasbir and Frances with our Sikh guide



Next stop - Haridwar. We were amongst several hundred passengers anxious to board the train. Since it only stopped for ten minutes, panic ensued. There was much shoving and pushing making all quite uncomfortable. It wasn't the highlight of the trip.

We left the train and with our porters carrying our luggage on their heads, we arrived at our hotel on the holy River Ganges. A ritual is preformed daily to honor the river as the Devine Mother of India. Bathing to wash away one's sins, throwing of cremated ashes, and yes drinking the water. Note, it's known as one of the world's most polluted rivers.



Another train ride takes us back to New Delhi where the Singhs conclude their trip and we start off on the Golden Triangle trek. Driven by our expert chauffeur Jassie, we made it to Agra safe and sound. I asked him what obstacles were the most challenging and he said the tuk-tuks!

Our tour guide made arrangements to pick us up before sunrise so we would see the magnificents of the Taj Maha in its optimal light. Created by the Mughal Emperor Shah Jahan for his beloved dead wife as a marble mausoleum. It was delightful!

We next traveled to Jaipur where we did another food street walk, Visited the Amber Fort Palace and



the Red Fort. We stayed at a hotel that rivaled the Taj Mahal. Our room was very large and comprised of all white marble.

The next day Jassie loaded us up for the trip back to New Delhi and the airport for our long flight home. On the way we stopped at the Monkey Temple. See below the monkey business going on.

Did you know these tidbits of history regarding Armenians and India? (Lifted from a Wikipedia site)



The Ottoman and the Safavid conquests of the Armenian highlands in the 15th century CE meant that many Armenians dispersed across the Ottoman and Safavid empires, with some eventually reaching Mughal India (Northern India). During the reign of the Mughal emperor Akbar, Armenians—such as Akbar's wife Mariam Begum Saheba and a Chief Justice Abdul Hai—gained prestige in the empire. While Armenians gained prestige serving as governors and generals elsewhere in the empire such as Delhi, Lahore and the Bengal, living in enclosed colonies and establishing churches.[4] Armenians worked as merchants, gunsmiths, gunners, priests and mercenaries for some of the Islamic rulers in India, with many noted to have served in the armies of various nawabs in Bengal and Punjab, such as Khojah Petrus Nicholas and Khojah Gurgin Khan.

Centuries later, an additional incentive for Armenian settlements in India was an Armenian agreement with the British East India Company. The agreement was signed in London on 22 June 1688, and a Julfan merchant, resident in London at the time, signed the treaty on behalf of the "Armenian

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Nation.” Competing with the Portuguese and the French, the British wanted to boost the Armenian presence in India, and the agreement accorded special trading privileges to the Armenians, as well as equal rights with British subjects regarding the freedom of residence, travel, religion, and unrestricted access to civil offices.

Due to Armenians not having a country of their own, the colonial powers of Europe massively favored trading with Armenians compared to their European counterparts during the age of mercantilism. Most notably, they became an intermediary between the Spaniards and the English. Armenians were known for their honesty.[5] Hence, it made them a great candidate to become international traders. Armenians grew to be very wealthy in India; due to their wealth, they established their own settlements in various Indian cities where they constructed their churches, newspaper publications, and even the first-ever Armenian constitution was written in Madras, India, 1773, by Shahamir Shahamirian, 14 years before the American constitution was written. Armenian trade network stretched from Manila all the way to Amsterdam. However, undoubtedly, Armenian traders were most successful in India.

Archaeologists uncover one of the world's oldest churches: "Sensational testimony to early Christianity"

By: *Emily Mae Czachor*

Updated on: *October 14, 2024 / 2:09 PM EDT / CBS News*

Archaeologists have unearthed the remains of an Armenian church dating back almost 2,000 years, making it the oldest structure of its kind in the country and one of the oldest in the world. Germany's University of Münster, which partnered with a team at the Armenian Academy of Sciences on the archaeological dig, announced the discovery Friday and called it "a sensational testimony to early Christianity in Armenia."

The joint team of archaeologists and researchers uncovered the building during excavations in Artaxata, once a thriving metropolis and commercial center, which for several centuries before and after the common era served as the capital of the ancient Ar-

menian kingdom. Excavations were part of the larger Armenian-German Artaxata Project, an initiative started in 2018 to study the area.

Experts believe the church found recently in Artaxata was originally built in the 4th century A.D. That timing coincides with the construction of Etchmiadzin Cathedral, also in Armenia, which is considered the ancient kingdom's first cathedral and is often regarded as the oldest cathedral in the world



A preliminary reconstruction shows the late antique church in Artaxata. © Armenian-German Artaxata Project

"The building, which dates back to the 4th century, is the oldest archaeologically documented church in the country — a sensational testimony to early Christianity in Armenia," Achim Lichtenberger, a professor at the University of Münster who works on the archaeology project in Artaxata, said in a statement.

Mkrtich Zardaryan of the Armenian Academy of Sciences, who also worked on the project, noted separately that the architecture of the church may help researchers understand something new about Armenia's history. The church is shaped like an octagon, with rectangular chambers extending out from four of the sides. It is the first octagonal church known to exist in Armenia, Zardaryan said, adding that churches with that shape typically appear in the eastern Mediterranean and can similarly date back as far as the 4th century.

The ancient church resembled early Christian memorial buildings, according to the University of Münster. It measured about 100 feet across and originally had mortar flooring, created mostly from sand and cement, with walls made from thick slabs of terracotta — a clay material that at the time was produced in places like Greece and Italy.

Pieces of the original material discovered at the site of the ruins suggested the church was decorated lavishly with terracotta, likely imported from the Mediterranean. Remains of wooden platforms found

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along with the clay helped researchers confirm the building's ancient origins by way of carbon dating, the university said.



One of the annex buildings of the church with a wooden podium © Armenian-German Artaxata Project



ACOM Cinema Saturdays



ACOM CINEMA SATURDAY

The following is a list of the Movies shown this year

March - *Amerikatski - St. Sahag*

April - *Anjar: Flowers, Goats, and Heroes - Stories from the Armenian Genocide - St. Sahag*

May - *The Umbrellas of Cherbourg - Naïry/Terry's House*

November - *Armenia My Home - Naïry/Terry's House*



ACOM CALENDAR OF EVENTS 2024-2025

Questions, suggestions, email:

ACOM President Kat Keljik at: k.j.keljik@gmail.com

DATE	DAY	TIME	EVENT
November 1-3, 2024	Fri-Sun	Various	Tapestry Dance Workshop - Armenian Weekend (Info)
Nov. 30	Sat	7:00 PM	Cinema Saturday for November
Dec. 9	Mon	5:30 PM	ACOM Board Meeting (Virtual)
Jan. 11 2025	Sat	6:00-11:00	ACOM Gagbant Party

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



ACOM BOARD MEMBERS 2024-2025

- President: Kat K.
- Vice President: Kassian V.
- Past President: Steven U.
- Secretary: Kathleen D.
- Communications Secretary: Lynne G.
- Treasurer: Naïry D.
- Webmaster & Newsletter Editor: Terry M.
- Members at Large: Mark W., Phil A.
- Board Advisor: Tom K.

Any ACOM current year 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.

ARMENIAN DANCE REHEARSALS

Sunday afternoons, at 3 pm in Roseville.
Interested in joining the group? email: yekibdos@gmail.com

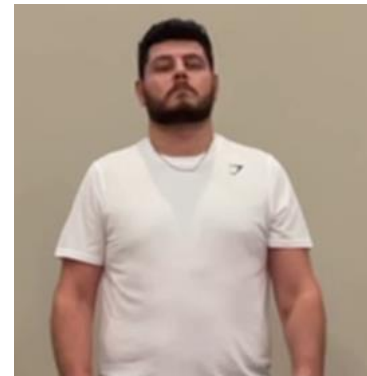
A Weekend of Armenian Dance November 1-3, 2024 Tapestry Folkdance Center, Minneapolis

On the weekend of November 1-3, 2024, Minnesota Armenians and international dancers from the upper Midwest and Canada, were treated to a mix of Armenian dances from various regions of Armenia. Dance Instructor/Choreographer from Toronto, Canada, Sevag Avakian, taught the International group a set of 4 dances that contained a lot of the basic elements of Armenian dance. He began with a Kochari style dance done in 2/4 rhythm that is typical of dances currently done in Armenia. His dance was a combination of Kochari style steps arranged for folk dancers. A second dance, a Tamzara, done in a 9/8 rhythm, was also a collection/sequence of traditional Armenian Tamzara steps. His third dance offering was a medley of dances from the Sassoun region of historic Armenia. This medley consisted of a set of 4 different Sassountsi dances, each with its own character but assembled to be done as a single continu-

ous sequence. His last workshop dance was called Ishkhanagan Bar (Princely dance) and was probably the most challenging dance of the workshop. Sevag gave us a culture talk on Saturday after lunch. He demonstrated a number of Armenian rhythm combinations on his Dhol (a smaller wooden drum with modern mylar drum heads on either side). He showed us the tuning and also talked about playing this drum for weddings in Toronto. He also showed some video clips of his dance group performing at various festivals. A great session with a lot of interesting information.

Sunday afternoon was ADE's time with Sevag. He taught us a choreography he designed for our group. ADE members enthusiastically attempted to learn the new choreography and will continue to work on it in the weeks to come so that it can be added to our performance repertoire. A great weekend!!!!

[Link to Sassoun Dance group](#)



ACOM 2024 PAID MEMBERS

If you do NOT SEE your name below, then you have NOT renewed your 2024 membership. You can still send in your membership by filling in the form on the back of this newsletter and mailing it to the address on the form.

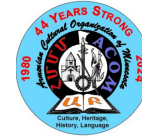
You can also use PayPal, accessible from the website.

THANK YOU !

Andeweg, George, Jeanne
Aram, George & Connie
Aroutiunian, Margarita; Usitalo, Steven
Arslan, Arnold
Asgian, Phil
Bulbulian, Francis, Barbara
Cafesjian, Kathy; Baradaran, Jeff
Charchian, Aram, Ruth
Daniels, Kathleen; Myers, Marcie, Mari
Digris, Naïry; McGibbon, Terry & Hassetts
Erickson, Bradley
Erickson, Cynthia, Leroy
Favre, Margaret, Jim
Gauro, Boghos, Lana
Gildensoph, Lynne
Hakobyan, Artur; Papyieva, Nina & family
Hayes, Michelle & Lila
Johnson, Andrea & Lowell
Kashian, Darla & family
Keljik, Kat; Earley, Matt
Keljik, Mark; Grantz, Caren
Keljik, Tom; Collins, Jennifer
Kourajian, Art
Lents, Nicholas; Francis, Walter
Matossian, Lou Ann
Meketarian, Martin, Mara & family
Mesrobian, Azad, Karen
Ohannesian, Judy; Tiffany, Doug
Poritsky, Joan
Rynda, Kelly
Savayan, Peka, Maria; Anderson, Stephen
Vaubel, Kass, Carol, Jamaica P.
Wiersbeck, Mark
Wiersbeck, Sarah
Ylitalo, Caroline, David & family

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, 2024

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: _____

==>Please Make Your Check Payable to ACOM<==



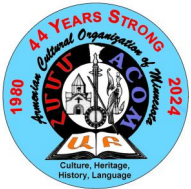
Complete this form and
Return it with your check to



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

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1703 Skillman Avenue West
Roseville, MN 55113

We're on the Web

www.mnarmenians.org