



ARIT

NEWSLETTER

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EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S CORNER

The Bay Area Friends of Armenia completed its twelfth year in 2004 in helping the people of Republic of Armenia. In this issue of ARIT, the BAFA Board of Directors presents a comprehensive twelve-year account of how BAFA supporters' donations have contributed to advancements in health, education, welfare and the sciences. And we thank you for continuing to be the most faithful "Friend of Armenia."

When a few of us embarked upon our venture to help Armenia after the breakdown of the Soviet Union, we were naive in thinking that our intervention would be needed for just a few years—that is, until Armenia could stand on its own feet. We, along with many others, were wrong in our estimations and now realize that the Armenian Diaspora has much more to do. Today, more than half of Armenia's population continues to live on a mere two dollars per day. Every time I visit our BAFA Soup Kitchens, I thank God for our supporters' commitment. I know that many of the elderly we serve would have otherwise perished during the last twelve years.

For your review, this issue of ARIT features BAFA's financial activities during 2004. As always, you will also find various updates on BAFA projects,

including personal reflections by individuals on their visit to Armenia. I am particularly pleased to include an article by my daughter Arpeny Haleblian Hart who contemplates on how her trip to Armenia contributed to her understanding of her "roots." One thing I have learned as an Armenian father, is that one trip to Armenia has more impact on our children than many years of "preaching."

John Poochigian in his article "Armenia—Forever Young," remarks on his recent medical visit to Armenia. He highlights the need for, and the progress made in introducing primary care medical services. Anahid Yeremian in "Success—10% Inspiration and 90% Perspiration," features the great scientific achievements of the Cosmic Ray Division of the Physics Institute this past year. And finally, Nancy Tengler presents "Feed Armenia's Future," a new BAFA program which will enable faithful donors to personally connect with an elderly or a child supported by the BAFA Soup Kitchens.

As Executive Director of BAFA, I thank each one of you for your unrelenting support to BAFA programs, and encourage and urge you to continue to help us assist our less privileged and very needy compatriots.

John Haleblian

Bay Area Friends of Armenia – A Twelve- Year Activities Report

You have been a faithful supporter of the Bay Area Friends of Armenia (BAFA). As in previous years, we are pleased to give you a comprehensive report on how your donations have been used to advance the health, education, welfare, and scientific excellence within the Republic of Armenia.

I. Welfare Projects

The issue of welfare of the elderly has been the primary concern of BAFA since its inception. As the attached Table indicates, BAFA has raised and transmitted \$728,100.00 for its Soup Kitchens program during the past twelve years of operation. Presently, the program serves almost 840 retirees and orphans, one meal a day for five days a week, in four Soup Kitchens located in Norki Massif and Erebuni areas, Yerevan, Nor Hadjn, Ashtarak, and auxiliary location of Charbach. These are managed by the staff of Fund for Armenian Relief, and currently have a kitchen crew of 22 who cook and serve food at the various locations.

Today, according to Ministry of Statistics of Armenia, 35 percent of the

Bay Area Friends of Armenia is a tax exempt, charitable organization with the sole purpose for promoting the health, education, welfare and scientific excellence for the people of the Republic of Armenia.

population is *poor* and another 16 percent is *extremely poor*. The average amount of Social Security checks received by the elderly, 7,000 drams ~ US\$ 13-14, (maximum for those who have worked 40 years of 11,320 drams ~ US\$ 22.50), buys only one and a half loaf of bread per day. So you can see how our Soup Kitchens go a long way in filling the critical need in the basic survival of the elderly.

II. Support to Schools

This past year was the first full year that the students of Norashen "Michnagarg" School occupied their reconstructed school, which was damaged during the Spitak earthquake. Mrs. Lorraine Caven, the main donor of the BAFA portion of the \$144,000 joint ASIF/BAFA project, was honored by the school. BAFA was pleased to celebrate the occasion when the school named its sports hall "Siranoush Kanchelian Sports Hall," her maiden name.

Currently, BAFA is actively working with Armenian Social Investment Fund in upgrading The Bakhchyan Michnagarg School in Goris. Reconstruction plans are in progress and we hope the project will start during 2005.

Unfortunately, the educational system in Armenia continues to be in real crisis. As the 2003 *Republic of Armenia –Poverty Reduction Strategy Paper* prepared by the Ministry of Statistics of Armenia reports, the annual government expenditure per student is equivalent to \$85.00. Also, the average monthly salary of public sector workers, including teachers is \$50, who in most cases, are still not paid on time. Minimal funds are allocated for the upkeep of schools, which are deteriorating due to lack of repair. Additionally, there are no funds for school supplies such as books, paper and pencils. Through your support we have been helping "Michnagarg" schools by contributing approximately \$1,000.00 to each. This sum amounts to about 10% of the annual budget of many village schools. During the last several years

we have visited 39 schools and transferred to their principals the sum of \$90,675.00. We have requested that the funds be allocated to supplement teachers' salaries and to purchase school supplies.

In 2004 we also continued to sponsor our "Breakfast for Children" program at Melik Kyugh "Michnagarg" school, helping them concentrate on their schooling rather than on their hunger.

III. Medical Projects

BAFA Board physician members provided ongoing patient management consultations to Dr. Vigen Markaryan (Erebuni Medical Center) and Dr. Hayk Avagian (St. Nerses the Great Medical Centre).

Under the supervision of Dr. Anna Hovakimyan, we sustained our eye/vision project. We had the eyesight of children and teachers checked at eight schools in the Tavoush Marz. Out of 2,334 children and teachers screened, 222 were fitted with eyeglasses. We also started checking the eyesight of the elderly at BAFA Soup Kitchens. Out of 115 elderly checked at Norki Massif Soup Kitchen, 96 were fitted with eyeglasses.

Your unwavering commitment has made this evolutionary progress in the health care arena feasible. We look forward to expanding the cooperation with our colleagues in Armenia, and your continued support will make this possible.

IV. Advanced Science

The brain drain from Armenia is a real and urgent problem. Young Armenian professionals are forced to leave Armenia due to the lack of employment opportunities upon their graduation from universities. Therefore, BAFA continued its proactive approach to help preserve one of the jewels of the Armenian scientific community, the Cosmic Ray Division (CRD) in Armenia. The CRD employs about 100 personnel including Ph.D. students and recent postdoctoral

scientists from Yerevan State University. It is striving for self-reliance by attracting funding from international scientific organizations, which highly value its research. In the meantime, BAFA is committed to closing the gaps. We thank you for your continued support of the CRD.

The attached Table shows that since BAFA's inception, you have contributed a total of \$1,104,500.00 of which \$1,040,200.00 "dollar for dollar," has been used to support health, education, welfare and advanced science related projects in Armenia. What about the balance of \$64,300.00 of additional unused funds? As with most humanitarian organizations, the largest amount of donations occurs during the month of December. Since BAFA needs to allocate \$6,000.00 monthly to our Soup Kitchens, the reserve dollars are used to fund them throughout the year.

Understandably, you have often asked, "How can you manage to transmit 'dollar for dollar' all of the donations to Armenia? Don't you have operational expenses in the US?" The answer is, "yes." BAFA employs a part-time secretary. BAFA board members cover operational expenses (personnel and office-related) incurred in the US, donating a total of \$164,000.00 during the past twelve years. The board members regularly pay their own travel expenses to Armenia to supervise the BAFA sponsored projects.

None of the achievements of BAFA would be possible without your generosity. BAFA Board members sincerely appreciate you for being a dedicated "Friend of Armenia" over the past twelve years. Your support at this juncture in the life of the Republic of Armenia makes a real difference. We thank you for your continued support.

BAFA Board of Directors
December 31, 2004

**Distribution of BAFA Funds for Health, Education, Welfare & Advanced Science
In Republic of Armenia 1993 - 2004 (x \$1,000)**

Distribution	1993	1994	1995	1996	1997	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	Total 93-04
Soup Kitchens	43.5	66	58.2	47.4	52.5	57.5	54.6	54.3	69.9	73.6	74.5	76.1	728.1
Medical Projects	0.5	10.6	0.9	12.2	4.1	16.2	1.6	10	15.9	0.8	8.2	15.9	96.9
Support to Schools	0	1.4	4.2	6.5	11.5	12	15.6	15.9	31.3	30.4	16.5	9.9	155.2
Advanced Science Total Annual										25	30	5	60
Distribution	44	78	63.3	66.1	68.1	85.7	71.8	80.2	117.1	129.8	129.2	106.9	
Total Distribution 1993-2004													1040.2
Additional Unused Funds on 12/31/04													64.3
Total Funds Collected													1104.5
Board Donations to Cover Office Expenses	18.8	11.8	11.2	10.3	12.6	12.6	11.3	12.8	12.4	15	19.1	16.1	164



Two smiling elderly women (widows) at BAFA's soup kitchen



Next to the Genocide Memorial name of village my grandpa was from



My dad and I with Mt. Ararat in the background

A Growing Bulb

This past December, our son Nathan came home from Kids Church with a narcissus bulb. I was struck by how ugly it was, a dark, dirty root sitting in a plastic cup with gravel and water. His teachers assured him that in a few weeks it would sprout beautiful flowers. It seems to get uglier, as the water turned murky, and the gravel became moldy. Still, true to what he was told, the bulb sprouted. Beautiful narcissus flowers bloomed in our kitchen.

I want to tell you about a deep work of healing that God is doing in my life that fits this analogy of the narcissus bulb. My name is Arpenny Haleblian Hart. I am 100 percent Armenian, and “Arpenny” is translated as sunshine. I grew up in a passionately Armenian home. I learned to speak Armenian before English. My mother cooked amazing Armenian food, including sarma, kufte, taboule and beureg. My brother and I attended Armenian language school every Saturday morning, and we spoke Armenian at home. We hung out with Armenians, listened to Armenian music and attended Armenian cultural events. We spent a great deal of our free time with our Armenian extended family.

Underneath all of this cultural pride and activities was a deep current of sadness and anger, like the ugly bulb. All four of my grandparents were survi-

vors of the 1915-1918 genocide of the Armenians in Turkey. Over a million and a half Armenians were murdered, including many of my grandparents’ brothers, sisters, and parents. I grew up hearing first-hand accounts of the horrifying massacres. These stories traumatized my sensitive spirit deeply and filled me with rage and fear. This trauma, coupled with the cultural pressure I felt, led me to disengage myself from my culture and heritage. Like the narcissus bulb, my culture felt ugly, dark and dreary. I began to reject my “Armenian-ness”. I questioned God’s wisdom in making me Armenian. Wouldn’t life be easier and less painful if I weren’t Armenian? I began to stop speaking Armenian and avoid being with Armenians. I attempted to bury this part of myself as deeply as I could.

Still, my struggle with my Armenian “bulb” kept surfacing. The trauma of the genocide stories that my grandparents told me still haunted me well into my thirties. I had unresolved confusion, fear and anger in my heart that my prayers didn’t seem to resolve. Finally, I began to ask God to show me what it means to be an Armenian, and God is wonderfully answering this prayer. After seeing a movie called “Ararat” and reading a book called Passage to Ararat, a hunger began in me to see the country myself. (Ararat is a majestic mountain in ancient Armenia that is a spiritual symbol to many Arme-

nians.) I longed to finally face this “bulb” in my life and allow it to sprout. My husband Jim, always supportive of my cultural heritage, encouraged me to go. As a result, I committed myself to a ten-day trip to Armenia with my parents on their annual missions trip.

This trip was an amazing gift to me, opening me up to this part of myself that I had buried for so long. I was awed to the beauty of Armenia, and proud to know that Armenia was the first nation to adopt Christianity as its national religion in 301 A.D. My fluency in the language made the trip more exciting: I conversed with these remarkably warm people and heard Armenian spoken everywhere I went. I was able to face some of my deepest pain as I visited Tsitsernakaberd, the Armenian genocide memorial. There on a long concrete wall were memorialized the 58 occupied Armenian villages, including the villages of my four grandparents. An eternal flame glowed brightly in the center of the memorial. Instead of upsetting me further, the memorial was deeply comforting to me. Somehow knowing that others remembered the genocide and shared my grief made the pain feel more bearable. In my journal I wrote that there is “a sacredness in collective remembering.” I also realized that God saw what happened and grieved with us.

The poverty in the Third World country of Armenia shocked me. Fifty-one percent of Armenian citizens are classified as poor or extremely poor. The 1988 earthquake, killing more than 50,000 Armenians, coupled with the nine year war with the neighboring country of Azerbaijan, has left many Armenians struggling just to survive. Orphaned children and the elderly are the hardest hit. My parents showed me how they have faced their cultural grief by serving the neediest people of their homeland. My father is the director of Bay Area Friends of Armenia or B.A.F.A. I accompanied my parents visiting B.A.F.A.’s soup kitchens, feeding primarily elderly widows and orphans. I rejoiced in seeing God’s heart for my people shown through the ministry of my parents. These visits so

inspired me that Jim and I continue to support this organization financially.

I returned from the trip deeply moved and changed. For the first time, I am able to allow God to water and shine upon the “bulb” of my heritage. I rejoice as I see sprouts beginning to grow and flower in this area of my life. Since returning, this metamorphosis continues as I pray with my women’s group to forgive those who murdered my people. As I have come to embrace my culture, I now want to express this to our children. Recently we started taking our children to Armenian language school, and even joined an Armenian social club! God created me to be Armenian and my culture and ethnicity matters to Him. I am so grateful to God for watering and shining on my dark, ugly bulb and causing my Armenian heritage to flower into something beautiful.

Arpeny Haleblian Hart

Reprinted from “Vision” Summer 2004

Armenia – Forever Young

Early in the development of the Armenian Mammography Center, Rita Balian approached members of the BAFA Board for support. BAFA purchased a film reader for the center. Over the past few years, Rita added gynecological services to the center. During the past year, she also added primary care medical services. The concept of primary care in the former Soviet Union has not yet materialized. Patients go to a “specialist” for each problem. There is tremendous reliance on “tests” and little verbal interaction.

In order to demonstrate a more productive health care delivery system, Rita invited several American-Armenian doctors to act as teachers and role models. She was kind enough to invite me as well. So last summer I spent two weeks in Armenia. While assisting young doctors to learn more about primary care, I learned a great deal about the realities of medical care in Yerevan

and Gavar (near Lake Sevan).

In Gavar, I met several amazing women whose stories typify desperate situations. One came in with pain in her breast. We looked in her chart and noted she had been told a year earlier that she had a suspicious lump—likely cancer. We informed her that the pain was due to the cancer. She was calm and responded politely that she knew she had cancer, but did not pursue it because no one was available to care for her invalid husband and treatment would require an expensive trip to Yerevan. She thanked us for our explanation and went home. Another woman came in with severe insomnia and explained that she was alone. She had a son killed in the earthquake in Gyumri and another living in Moscow with a fatal lung disease. She asked, “Why did the healthy son have to die in the earthquake?”

In my last ARIT article, I tried to convey the needs of the average person living in Armenia, and the need of the Diaspora to take an active role in elevating the standard of living in Armenia. In the two years since I had visited Armenia, I witnessed great changes. In the center of Yerevan there are a couple of square miles of great hotels, restaurants, museums, and theaters. There are well dressed young Armenian men and women enjoying the good life. Everyone looks healthy and young. So why are Armenians dying younger today than before independence?

There are plenty of statistics to show a gradual decline in life expectancy in Armenia. We read of remodeled hospitals capable of providing western level of care for a wide range of serious problems. We read Armenian Government declarations of increasing GNP. So why are Armenians dying younger? Some may point to abuse of alcohol and tobacco, unsafe driving habits, and a diet high in salt and fat.

The two biggest problems do not show well in medical statistics. The distribution of what little wealth Armenia has is appalling by any standard. This is the result of a lack of accountability of decision makers to the people. If Armenia were richer, the rich would

be richer, but they do not invest in the infrastructure adequately to benefit the majority. The other problem is a lack of confidence in the health care system. The average citizen does not seek medical care, unless desperate for relief. When he or she sees a doctor, there are many tests performed, but little explanations provided. The fees are beyond the average citizen’s ability to pay. At first, I thought such people are also non-compliant in taking medications for chronic disorders such as hypertension and diabetes. However when you ask them why they do not take their medications, they quickly point out that at least 50% of the pharmaceuticals sold in Armenian pharmacies are FAKE. They would prefer to spend their limited funds on the well being of their children, in the hope they will have a better life.

Most adults in Armenia have little hope for a better life and recognize Armenia’s greatest resource is its upcoming generation. Most adults in Armenia hope that their children will live better and do all they can for them. These children will be the next leaders and citizens of Armenia. Whether our nation and culture continues to evolve or die will depend on the preparation they receive. This is not only the responsibility of adults in Armenia, but also of Armenian adults everywhere.

Surely, we can take great pride when we visit central Yerevan. The streets are filled with beautiful young men and women. The shop windows are filled with the latest fashions. The restaurants are filled with people enjoying great food and drink. Surely, Armenia must finally be on the path that our ancestors dreamed of. Surely, we can visit Armenia with a clear conscience that we have fulfilled our duty to our ancestors in realizing a Free Armenia.

However, when you are in the airport in Yerevan, you may notice a small group of teenage girls waiting to travel to Dubai or Turkey. Remember them well, as you would remember our Martyrs of 90 years ago.

John Poochigian

Feed Armenia's Future

In May of 2004, I was privileged to visit Armenia with my mother and daughter. Under John and Arpi Haleblian's capable guidance we toured the country. We also made time to visit BAFA's Nor Hadjn soup kitchen where clients receive one meal a day. We discovered an impressive dining room with the capacity of seating many more. The kitchen is large, clean and well equipped. The staff is friendly and efficient. We found that all the elements are there to serve more people, except money.

We thought that if we could bring the soup kitchen clients home to BAFA supporters, we may be able to extend our reach. Thus, "**Feed Armenia's Future**" project idea was born. "Feed Armenia's Future" is a sponsorship program designed to provide our supporters with a personal connection to the grateful individuals who are being served in the soup kitchens. For \$20 per month you can sponsor a child or elderly soup kitchen client—providing him or her with five vital, nutritious meals per week. In turn, we will send you a picture and brief profile on the individual you are sponsoring and an annual status report.

BAFA soup kitchens provide 840 individuals, five meals per week. We believe we can do more by encouraging you to sponsor a child or a grandparent in the "Feed Armenia's Future" program. These individuals have lost loved ones—parents, children or spouses—in one of the disasters that have struck Armenia over the last 16 years. As a result, they are completely dependent on BAFA for nutritional sustenance. Unfortunately, there are many more individuals who need our assistance.

Please consider adding a sponsorship to your regular giving. You will be making a meaningful difference in the life of one individual human being while your generosity helps "Feed Armenia's Future!"

Nancy Tengler

Success—10% Inspiration, 90% Perspiration: Armenia's Cosmic Ray Division and Armenian Diaspora, Hand-in-Hand

It is a new year and once more time to reflect upon the previous year and ponder about what the future holds. My personal reflections include asking myself, "How would God rate me as a person?" "What would He think of my priorities and how I spent my energy?" "How did I do by my family and friends, and how did I do by my people in Armenia?" "How can I do better next year?" I think Armenians are a particularly reflective people, constantly trying to improve. It is part of the positive fabric of our culture. Maybe it is one of the reasons why we, as a people, excel no matter what the circumstances and no matter how enormous the difficulties.

The Cosmic Ray Division in Armenia is a prime example of success in the face of adversity. The tenacious and unrelenting efforts of its leader, Professor Ashot Chilingarian, the self-sacrificing efforts of its scientific, technical, and support staff, and the steady, unwavering backing of the Armenian Diaspora in the U.S. and Canada, are all critical links in the chain of successes the CRD is achieving in the interna-

tional arena.

The list of impressive CRD achievements in the past year includes: 1) Continued success of the Aragats Regional Space Environmental Center (ARSEC), the best ground-based space weather research center in the world; 2) The publication of fourteen scientific papers in refereed international scientific journals and many more in conference proceeding; 3) Continued scientific partnership with the U.S. National Oceanographic and Atmospheric Agency's Space Environmental Center (NOAA-SEC) and the European Space Agency (ESA); 4) Continued strong participation in the Commission on Space Research (COSPAR), where Professor Chilingarian's contribution to the planning of future space research prompted a letter of commendation from the commission's executive director; 5) Inclusion in the European Commission On Science and Technology e-Space Weather Alert Network (COST e-SWAN); and 6) Continued collaborative work with Stanford, Forschungszentrum (Germany) and Nagoya University (Japan).

The CRD and the Diaspora that has stood by it have much to be proud of. But perhaps the most significant accomplishment of the year was the addition of 18 students and recent graduates to the CRD, working either as research assistants or thesis students. The senior CRD staff mentor and teach these youth,

passing on their skills and experience. In turn, the young scientists bring to the CRD fresh blood and new ways of looking at things. A major goal of the CRD Committee of the Bay Area Friends of Armenia is for this new generation of Armenian scientists to have the opportunity to continue working at the CRD upon graduation. With your help, we can do it! It is very important to educate young Arme-



Young CRD employees and students with their advisors Prof. Ashot Chilingarian (back row) and Dr. Varuzhan Danielyan (electronics engineer)

nians, and it is equally important to provide them with opportunities to stay and work in Armenia.

In addition to its scientific work, the CRD continues to take on social responsibility for those less fortunate than themselves. As in past years, orphanages and soup kitchens benefited from the honey (30 kg. in 2004) produced in the bee hives donated to the CRD by the late Dr. Arthur Hazarabedian. CRD also donated two computers to the Antarout village school where it is the responsibility of the CRD trainees to provide technical support to

the school.

I dream of an Armenia where citizens can earn a living and take care of their own, preserving their pride and dignity. This dream is affirmed on a small scale as I watch the progress of the CRD. I have learned that a moment's inspiration can result in years of perspiration only if we commit to meeting the goals we set for ourselves. To be sure, the struggle continues, but I can see light at the end of the tunnel. The CRD scientists, students, and support personnel continue to need our financial assistance, and I hope that you, friends

of the CRD, are proud of the CRD achievements you make possible. We are an inseparable team.

Professor Ashot Chilingarian, the 80 scientists, technicians and students of the CRD in Armenia, and the CRD Committee of BAFA, thank you for your continued generosity and partnership.

Anahid Yeremian



CRD Master's Degree students, Simon Zhamkochian and Sergey Abrahamyan examining data from the Cosmic Ray detectors on Mt. Aragats, with their advisor, Professor Ashot Chilingaryan



Young CRD electronics engineers, Karen Arakelyan and Tigran Hovhannissyan, testing a super sensitive magnetic field detector which they designed and built for the Aragats Regional Space Environmental Center

**WE COULD NOT HAVE
DONE IT WITHOUT
YOU!**