

# Marking a Mentor's Memory: **Gosdan Bozajian** Establishes \$50,000 Endowment at the American University of Armenia

**D**ickran Bozajian was a professor of mathematics in Constantinople who penned a book on the subject and transferred his love of education and solid faith in the will of the Armenian people to his grandson, Gosdan Constantine Bozajian. These were lessons Gosdan never forgot and helped him to achieve all that he has today.

Unfortunately five years ago, Gosdan suffered a stroke that impacted his speech. His youngest daughter, Nancy Carlin, speaks on his behalf about a life filled with service to the community and a love for his Armenian heritage.

A native of Arapkir, Gosdan Bozajian and his family left their native city during the Genocide, returned briefly after the massacres and left permanently in 1924. They passed through Aleppo and France before settling in Philadelphia three years later. Gosdan, inspired by his grandfather, graduated from Temple University High School as valedictorian. It was only a lack of supplementary funding outside of the scholarships he earned that stopped him from continuing his studies.

After working various jobs and helping at his Uncle Krikor's grocery store, he tried his hand at tailoring and over the next 10 years was able to open a small dry cleaning shop in the Kensington district of northeast Philadelphia. "I find it amazing considering what my father endured. He lost his father, was displaced by the Genocide, arrived not knowing the language and with no money, and was later drafted into the Second World War at the age of 33 briefly becoming a POW. He was still able to raise a family and secure our future," Nancy says with pride in her father's perseverance.

Living near her father, Nancy acknowledges her father's role in establishing a strong Armenian presence in their lives, "We felt we had a large community around us because of the church and the organizations we took part in. We were active in St. Gregory's Armenian Church, we were involved with AYF and with the big Arapkertsi organization that existed when he first came to the city—the members are very old now but they still have the Arapkertsi picnics. My father is very generous and supportive of all Armenian organizations."

Nancy remembers with amusement her father's routine of rushing off to this or that Armenian meeting after dinner. His passion for community involvement developed his love of writing through regular contributions to *Hairenik* and the *Armenian Weekly*. "He loved writing—it's unfortunate he wasn't able to pursue higher education," Nancy says, "When we were growing up in America during the 1950's and 60's, he

wanted to make sure that his three daughters went to college."

He taught his children what being Armenian meant to him, "He told us we are a proud people. Growing up we knew everything about the Genocide and we were always proud to be Armenian. We had to do our best so others thought Armenians were good people."

Since his retirement, Gosdan Bozajian has enjoyed spending time with his three daughters, Diane, Linda and Nancy, and their families in Philadelphia and California. Ever since his wife's unexpected death last year, Gosdan has turned his attention, like most of the Diaspora, towards helping independent Armenia, by safeguarding the future of education in the Republic, "My father's affiliation was strongly ARF and he was ARF Philadelphia chairman until his stroke at age 85. But when Armenia became free he wanted to support AUA. He wanted to honor his grandfather's memory by supporting something that would benefit the people living in Armenia."

He has established a \$50,000 endowment at the American University of Armenia both in his grandfather's and his own name. Nancy explains, "They saved their whole lives and did not spend lavishly. He had one store and over the years he saved as much as he could. He didn't have a lot but he always wanted to do a lot for others."

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Gosdan Bozajian (left) with his grandparents, brother Ashod and mother.

# Accomplished Actress **Loulou Fermanian** Passes Away

**T**he AGBU Ardavazt Theater Company recently lost one of its most talented actresses, Loulou Fermanian. During the entire forty-two years of her involvement with Armenian Theater, from the day she joined the AGBU-AYA Vahram Papazian Theater Group, in Beirut, Lebanon, as a young girl and founding member, to the day her untimely and unexpected death took her away from her friends at the AGBU Ardavazt Theater Company in Los Angeles, Loulou has always been a skillful, productive and a committed actress, not to mention a dedicated AGBU-AYA member. During her 42 years of a creative and prolific artistic career in Armenian theater, folk music, singing as well as TV appearances and commercial advertising, she portrayed more than 20 lead characters, each as interesting and as successful as the other. Although her preference was to remain and create in amateur theater, her attitude and approach has always been extremely professional. No matter how difficult her role or how complex her character, she did justice to it, by thoroughly analyzing and studying the characters she portrayed, by learning her lines on time, and by attending rehearsals religiously.

Loulou's theatrical credits with the AGBU-AYA

Vahram Papazian Group include, Rosoura in Carlo Goldoni's *The Liar*, Angelique in Moliere's *Georges Dandin*, Yeliena Ivanovna Popova in Anton Chekhov's *The Bear*, Suzy in Marcel Pagnol's *Topaze*, Marguerite in Georges Shehad's *Vasco*, Beatrice in William Shakespeare's *Much Ado About Nothing* (with phenomenal reviews), Raymond in Georges Feydeau's *A Flea in Her Ear*, and Yvonne in *Madame's Late Mother*, Shoushan in Hagop Baronian's *The Honorable Beggars*, and Cleopatra Mamayev in Alexander Ostrovsky's *Diary of a Scoundrel*. She also took part in the group's historic tours of Armenia in 1971, France and England in 1975, and tours to Cyprus, Syria, Jordan and Jerusalem with the Antranik Dance Ensemble, of Beirut, as a lead singer.

After settling down in Los Angeles with her husband Ara Fermanian, himself an accomplished stage manager and a longtime member of both Beirut and Los Angeles AGBU theater groups, Loulou joined the Ardavazt The-

ater and took lead roles as Hasmig Chellerian in Alan Ayckbourn's adaptation of *How The Other Half Loves*, Angele in Marcel Pagnol's *The Baker's Wife*, Nounoufar in Peter Shaffer's adaptation of *Black Comedy*, Yvonne in Georges Feydeau's *Madame's Late Mother*, several character roles in Hagop Baronian's *Perils of Politeness*, Hermine Bretoux in Claude Magnier's *Who is it That Died?*, Brigit in Marc Camoletti's *Brigit, Brigit*, and the remarkable role of Filumena in Eduardo De Filippo's *Filumena Marturano*, which turned out to be Loulou's swan song.

Loulou was a driving force in getting the Theater to forge ahead and achieve a standard that all other Armenian theater groups had to strive for. She was instrumental in organizing a triumphant tour to Lebanon in 1997, and also took part in local tours in Orange County, Fresno, San Francisco and Boston.

As an accomplished actress Loulou was adept at both dramatic as well as comedic roles. But she excelled in the latter, because of her natural disposition towards comedy, joy of living and positive outlook on life. She strongly rejected sadness and gloom. Her love of all the good things in life was contagious. Having endured hardships as an orphan, she had a natural tendency of being helpful and generous to people, her family and friends, specially to children and orphans. Knowing her wishes too well, her husband, Ara Fermanian, decided to use the \$10,000 donations in lieu of flowers, collected at Loulou's funeral, to establish a fund in her name, to help the four AGBU-supported Children's Centers in Armenia.

Loulou will be missed by her friends, loved ones and colleagues.

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