

STEPAN KARAMARDIAN, FRIEND AND COLLEAGUE.

Stepan Karamardian's life had its beginnings in a remote part of Northern Syria and it ended in the San Francisco Bay Area, so suddenly. We have been fortunate to be his friends and his family, and to appreciate the breadth and depth of his accomplishments. Stepan was devoted to education throughout his entire life. Overcoming many hardships that many others would have been unable to face, he persevered in Kessab and the seaport town of Latakia to obtain an education that would prepare him to continue his studies in the United States until, at Berkeley, he successfully completed his university studies and obtained his Ph.D. degree. His career was in education and research, and as Professor and Administrator, he achieved his goal of educating the youth of several generations. He knew that his students moved on to high accomplishments, and that gave him considerable satisfaction.

A turning point in Stepan's career came in 1988. This happened very suddenly. The earthquake in Armenia and its aftermath shook us all into the realization that Armenia, our Homeland, so remote by political and geographical barriers, and yet so close to our heart, was calling for help. I knew Stepan before the Armenian earthquake, but it was in the early months of 1989 when I realized that he had a strong urge to serve Armenia in the field he knew best - in education. At first, independently, Armen Der Kiureghian and I were developing our plan for a Technical University, and Stepan had conceived the need in Armenia for a Business and Management leadership program. We came together and we united our hopes and efforts for an educational mission that would help Armenia to recover from the disaster and to build itself again as a vibrant and dynamic country. Independence soon followed, and with the support of the University of California, the Armenian General Benevolent Union, and the Government of Armenia, a new university was established, the American University of Armenia.

For the past five years, without rest and without loss of efficiency, Stepan pursued the goal of providing a graduate education for a degree in Master of Business Administration that would produce new leaders in the government and the private sector in order to meet the new challenges in Armenia's transition to a democratic country. No one could miss seeing the happiness on Stepan's face during the first Commencement of AUA in October, 1993, in Yerevan, as he read the names of the graduates and handed them their diplomas.

The Center for Business Research and Development at AUA was also Stepan's brainchild. He knew that opportunities had to be created in Armenia to develop new enterprises, and the mechanism for this was through a Center where projects could be developed and carried out. I first heard the word "incubator" in connection with Business Management from Stepan. A project is initiated at the Center, it incubates and then it is launched in the business world as a mature

business. In other words, the venture is nurtured by the scientists of the Center until it is ready to be launched. Stepan took great satisfaction in conceiving such a program, and it created great enthusiasm among the faculty and students.

Commitment, dedication, and devotion to a mission: these words express Stepan's life since I met him in 1988. Commitment, dedication, and devotion, not only to education, but also to his Homeland. He served at AUA as a member of the Board of Trustees, Dean of the College of Business and Management, and Director of the Center for Business Research and Development. We all know that Stepan's life during the last five years was the fulfillment and culmination of his career as an educator and a scientist.

Here I have presented to you a career of fulfillment that was accomplished without ignoring devotion and dedication to family. Stepan's dedication to education was also fulfilled by his three daughters who were his pride and joy. Together with his wife, Seta, they planned and worked and lived to give the best possible opportunities to their children, and they succeeded. The credit is shared with Stepan and Seta by their daughters Liza, Vera, and Rita.

Stepan left us early, but he accomplished his goal of serving his family, friends, and students in the United States, his adopted country, and the people of Armenia, his Homeland.

A Greek Philosopher in the third century B.C. has said: "The happiest person is the one who has discovered that what he could be doing and what he is doing are the same thing." Stepan had discovered this in his life's work.

God bless Stepan Karamardian's memory, and God give consolation to his family and friends.

by Mihran Agbabian
12 July, 1994

At Dr. Karamardian's family's request, the Stepan Karamardian Memorial Fund was created to benefit the American University of Armenia. Those wishing to make a contribution may give their donation to Mr. Mratsch Mkrfchian, Chief Accountant, AUA room (5th floor).