A Foreword
It seems we are compelled to find unifying threads in the lives of the people we value. Similar stories of origin, upbringing, influences and aspirations must underpin, we believe, the lives of those holding similar, indeed coveted, stations in life. It perhaps comforts one to know that there is some teleology to the whole thing—that the path can be gleaned from the end itself. And to some extent, of course, there is.

In glimpsing into the lives of these judges of Armenian origin within the federal legal system, themes of ancestoral hardship, paying homage to humble beginnings and, of course, giving back to their community abound—and for good reason, of course. But what overwhelmed me in reading these interviews is just how much more interesting everything else was. I heard voices of homage but also of self-satisfaction, echoes of humility but also of pride, reflections of drive but also of disenchantment. We are a complicated people, indeed: it is clear in considering these profiles that our history in the deserts escapes none of us, that our titles hide nothing of our historic disenfranchisement and, that our future may never outpace the memory of whence we came. You will see these themes in these interviews—each judge reflecting on them differently, each contextualizing the impact personally and, of course, each teaching the practical lessons of their path to the bench, and for the future, with a tenor uniquely theirs.

And this is what one should ex-Continued on page 4

BLACK ROBES AND WHY THEY MATTER

Five Profiles of Our Judges in the Federal Sector That Should Make You Think

Chairman’s Message
Here we are, bearing witness together to a quarter century of the Armenian Bar Association’s organizational growth, public service and national commitment. But we do more than merely watch others and listen to ourselves. We have become outspoken upstanders rather than idle bystanders, active participants instead of unconcerned passersby. You have closed the gap between our dreams and our deeds.

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Please visit our website frequently for more information on these and other upcoming events.
On Saturday, November 8, 2014, I accompanied the Armenian Bar Association on a day-long road trip from Los Angeles to Manzanar. Located just north of Lone Pine, California, Manzanar was the site of one of ten major concentration camps that incarcerated thousands of Japanese Americans who were evicted from their West Coast homes during World War II. At its peak, Manzanar held over 10,000 incarcerated Japanese Americans who were interned during World War II. In total, more than 120,000 Japanese Americans, most of them United States citizens, were removed--by executive order of President Franklin D. Roosevelt--from their American homes and relocated to far-off internment camps.

Steve Yoda, President of the Japanese American Bar Association, made the pilgrimage with a number of devoted Armenian Bar Association members to Manzanar on November 8, 2014. Below is a recount of the day’s activities by Steve Yoda, whose mother was born in a similar concentration camp in Utah and whose father was interned at the age of three. His parents are both Niseis, (derived from “ni” second and “sei” generation), commonly understood to mean a son or daughter of Japanese immigrants who was born and educated in North America, especially in the United States. Grandchildren of the Japanese-born immigrants are called Sansei.

By Steve K. Yoda

On Saturday, November 8, 2014, I accompanied the Armenian Bar Association on a day-long road trip from Los Angeles to Manzanar. Located just north of Lone Pine, California, Manzanar was the site of one of ten major concentration camps that incarcerated thousands of Japanese Americans who were evicted from their West Coast homes during World War II. At its peak, Manzanar held over 10,000 incarcerated, the vast majority of whom were American citizens.

We departed from Encino at 8:00 a.m. During the comfortable three-and-a-half-hour ride on a chartered air-conditioned bus, Armenian Bar Association Chairman Armen Hovannisian delivered a powerful history of the Japanese American experience and screened two documentary films: “Unfinished Business,” a film about Gordon Hirabayashi, Fred Korematsu, and Min Yasui, three men who challenged the wartime curfew and exclusion orders against Japanese Americans; and “Toyo’s Camera,” a film about Toyo Miyatake, a renowned photographer from Los Angeles’ Little Tokyo who was incarcerated at Manzanar. Over a delicious box lunch, I engaged in deep conversation about history and human rights with my fellow travelers.

We arrived at Manzanar at around 11:30 a.m. It was a beautiful day. The temperature was in the mid-70s. Though the terrain was rugged and desolate, it was, in its own way, sublime beauty. The ironic juxtaposition of natural beauty with the injustice perpetrated at Manzanar was not lost upon the group. We were greeted by fellow Angeleno, Hank Umemoto, a former Manzanar incarceree and author of “Manzanar to Mount Whitney,” an autobiographical account of his life experience. Rose Masters, a park ranger and researcher at the Manzanar National Historic Site, served as our group’s trusty guide around the former camp.

In a small theater inside Manzanar’s visitor center, Hank spoke for over an hour about his experiences in Manzanar and about his life before and after Manzanar. He shared personal family photos and fielded several questions from the audience. Rose then took us on a walking tour of two reconstructed barracks, which housed Japanese American families. Each barracks was divided into four one-room units. I was struck by how small each unit was.

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Sara Anjargolian was featured in a Huffington Post article on October 7, 2014, Igniting Entrepreneurship in Unexpected Places: An Interview With Sara Anjargolian of Impact Hub Yerevan. The full article may be found at: http://huff.to/1vLuunA

Mardiros H. Dakessian and Zareh A. Jaltorossian successfully brought an action against the California Franchise Tax Board (FTB) for a refund of personal income taxes paid on sales of small business stock. The Superior Court of California granted summary judgment for the FTB. The taxpayer appealed, and the Court of Appeal, 208 Cal.App.4th 1247, (2014), reversed and remanded. On remand, the taxpayer filed a motion for attorneys’ fees. The Superior Court denied the motion, and the taxpayer appealed. The Court of Appeal held that: (1) litigation conferred significant benefits on a large class of persons; (2) financial burden of private enforcement warranted an award of attorney’s fees; and (3) the court could not, in the interest of justice, pay award out of taxpayer’s recovery.

Marsha V. Kazarosian was recently elected to serve as President of the Massachusetts Bar Association. As President, she is responsible for selecting the association’s executive board and section leadership. She is a principal attorney at Kazarosian Costello & O’Donnell LLP in Haverhill, MA, where she concentrates in civil rights litigation, family law and discrimination law. For the 2014-15 year, Marsha was appointed to the American Bar Association’s Tort Trial and Insurance Policy Section Plaintiffs’ Policy Task Force and the ABA’s Gender Equity Task Force. Marsha is an active member of and participant in the Armenian community in the New England area.

Nicholas Koumjian is the International Co-Prosecutor at the Extraordinary Chambers in the Courts of Cambodia, a hybrid court trying crimes committed during the Khmer Rouge regime. Over the past 14 years and following 20 years as a prosecutor in Los Angeles, he has worked at international criminal tribunals dealing with war crimes in Bosnia, East Timor, Sierra Leone and Darfur.

Gary Moomjian, Co-Vice Chair of the Armenian Bar, represents LakeLand Industries, a Nasdaq publicly-traded company, which in October, 2014 announced the completion of an $11.1 million private financing through Craig-Hallum Capital Group. Lakeland was represented by the law firm of Moomjian, Waite & Coleman, LLP, Jericho, NY, where Gary is a partner. Craig-Hallum was represented by Ellinoff Grossman & Schole LLP, of which Tamar Donikyan, an active ArmenianBar member, is a partner. Both Gary and Tamar engage in the practice of corporate/securities law in the NY area. Prior to joining Ellinoff several years ago, Tamar was an attorney at the Moomjian firm.

Artin Shaverdian recently joined Nossaman LLP as a partner. Artin is an experienced litigator practicing in the areas of eminent domain/ inverse condemnation, real estate, municipal, redevelopment, and business law. He represents public agencies, private individuals and business entities in eminent domain and inverse condemnation litigation, other valuation related litigation, the acquisition, disposition and development of real property, prosecuting and defending California Environmental Quality Act challenges, construction defect and other breach of contract matters, and redevelopment matters.

Please send your job announcements, press releases, articles, and/or noteworthy information to: Saro Kerkonian at Skerkonian@aol.com
pect when one inquires, as we did, as to what advice a judge would give to young Armenian-American lawyers. Each was ready to teach, to impart. This, of course, is an amazing thing—something for which we, as an Armenian Bar Association, are most appreciative. But, there is so much more that was compelling in their responses. In reading the interviews, I challenge you to read more deeply, to study more critically and to think more broadly about our interviewees and their reflections. Look beyond their positions and even their common heritage, and capture what emerges in some as resounding bells and in others as a marked whisper: that, even in achievement, there is always something more that must be sought; that, even in our hardship, there is always something that must be celebrated; and that, even in our confident identity, there is always something that is steadily changing.

The interviews that follow are the first in a two-part series on Armenian-American judges within the federal system. In a future issue, we will present our second installment of the series: a thought-provoking interview with Judge Samuel Der-Yeghiayan, U.S. Federal District Court Judge for the Northern District of Illinois. We would like to thank our interviewees for their graciousness and, of course, our interviewers for bringing their meaningful stories to us.**

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**Black Robes And Why They Matter**

Continued from page 1

Hon. Larry Alan Burns  
U.S. Federal District Judge for the Southern District of California

Judge Burns started our conversation with “Parev, inch bes es?” I knew this was going to be a very friendly and pleasant conversation, particularly as he recounted to me that he has been married for 35 years and tells his wife all the time that his next wife will be Armenian. He attributed much, including a long and successful marriage, back to his Armenian roots and the fact that he is a religious individual. He insisted that being a good person has led him to have a blessed life, for which he has immense gratitude and then reminded me: “God’s providence has had implications on culture and people as well.”

Judge Burns was nominated to the federal bench in the Southern District of California by President George W. Bush in 2003, and confirmed shortly thereafter by a 91-0 U.S. Senate confirmation vote. Previously, he had served a magistrate judge in the same court and, prior to that, a state and federal prosecutor. His passion for trying cases was undeniable as he recounted his own experiences and offered advice that every attorney, at some point, should try cases and not shy away from sitting first or second chair in at least a handful of trials. His most important piece of advice, however, was abundantly clear: “Always consider your reputation in any action you take as a lawyer.” Reflecting on his 36 years of experience, Judge Burns added: “Law isn’t everything—it’s just your chosen profession” and recommended that attorneys should strive to strike a balance among family, health and work. One of his few regrets, he said, was not taking more time to enjoy his life along the way.

Considering the achievements of the Armenian-American community, Judge Burns stated matter-of-factly: “Of course we are successful, we are Armenian.” He described the collective Armenian people as industrious, hard-working, smart, and highly-motivated—a people who are able to overcome adversity. In fact, he attributed his own personal success to the fact that he is half-Armenian. He recalled with visible somberness that his grandfather only survived the Armenian Genocide because his mother hid him beneath her undergarments and bribed a Turkish guard to secure their escape. These and similar stories of survival, reminded Judge Burns, have had a profound impact in shaping our people. He remains proud to carry his heritage forward by hiring Armenian law students when he can and maintaining a close relationship with his local Armenian church: “As Armenians, we have overcome a great deal and, therefore, we each must do our part to advance our collective interest.”
Hon. Claire C. Cecchi
U.S. Federal District Judge for the District of New Jersey

Claire (Chadirjian) Cecchi was raised in Whitestone, New York, the daughter of second generation Armenian-American parents. She explained that her ancestors came with nothing but their traditions, hoping to build a better life for themselves and their offspring. They were proud to be Americans, overcoming great obstacles as did other immigrant groups while, at the same time, true to the great moral courage and work ethic of the first generation of Armenian-Americans. She considers Armenian-Americans’ greatest achievement as becoming an integral part of building this country, living the American dream, and distinguishing themselves in the arts, politics, law and business.

Judge Cecchi grew up and attended the Bronx High School of Science, Barnard College, Columbia University and Fordham University School of Law in New York City, the original American melting pot. She met her husband, James Cecchi, on her first day of law school. She believed that becoming a lawyer would give her a unique opportunity to give back to the community. Judge Cecchi’s first post-law school position was in the office of the Corporation Counsel of New York City, then on to private practice as a litigator in New Jersey for 24 years until being selected as a United States Magistrate Judge. Judge Cecchi was then nominated by President Obama to the United States District Court for the District of New Jersey where she continues to serve today. Her advice to newly admitted or aspiring attorneys is to be courteous and civil while remaining a strong advocate. Excellent attorneys, she maintains, present all facts to the Court, even those that are not favorable, and they know when to yield an argument if their position is not strong.

She is always mindful of how we, as Armenian-Americans, have distinguished ourselves in many fields and finds it inspiring to look back upon her own family—and to remember what they did to make what she and the rest of us have today possible. Judge Cecchi views our role going forward as working to ensure that, as time passes, our children continue to learn about our great cultural heritage: “If we do that, we forge a bond between ourselves and our past and, in doing so, maintain our ongoing success within the multicultural American community.”

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Hon. Jacqueline Chooljian
Magistrate Judge in the United States District Court of the Central District of California

“As I’m not quite five feet tall, it’s a definite novelty and not an unattractive perk of the job to be the tallest person in the room when I sit on the elevated bench in the courtroom,” says Judge Chooljian. When she was applying to the bench, there were no female Armenian judges in the country, she remembers—a fact that is no longer the case. She loves the intellectual challenge of “getting to drill down” to the facts and make educated decisions in a variety of areas of the law, and reminds us that “the civilized and peaceful resolution of disputes/conflicts—especially when one looks around the world today—is a heck of a lot better than the alternative.” One of her motivations to become a federal magistrate judge, was “so that other Armenian female lawyers/aspiring lawyers . . . could see that being a federal judge was a realistic possibility for them.”

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Judge Chooljian’s career path was certainly marked with achievement. Upon graduation, she clerked for U.S. Federal District Judge Alicemarie H. Stotler, then spent two years working at Gibson, Dunn & Crutcher. She then spent the bulk of her legal career at the United States Attorney’s Office in Los Angeles prosecuting a variety of federal criminal cases. Reflecting on opportunities available to lawyers seeking federal experience, she recommended that members of the bar should take advantage of the many possibilities available in Los Angeles, such as volunteering to work on a pro se civil rights cases, undertaking limited engagements to assist with discovery or motions, and even participating in pro se clinics where lawyers can volunteer for discrete hours at a time.

Judge Chooljian is proud that Armenians have made contributions to American society in many fields such as law, medicine, literature, politics and others while, at the same time, retaining a unique cultural identity. “We, like many other ethnic groups, contribute to the rich cultural fabric that makes America what it is.” She concluded with a thought: “Maintaining that balance of being modern American citizens but retaining our unique cultural identity will always be the challenge—ensuring that our ‘Armenianness’ doesn’t melt away in this great melting pot that is America.”

Judge Amy C. Hoogasian grew up in suburban Chicago—under the encouraging eye of her late father, the Hon. Jack Hoogasian and her lawyer mom, Claudia Aho Hoogasian. The late Judge Hoogasian served on the Board of Governors of the Armenian Bar Association as did the current Judge Hoogasian. Her father’s election as a Circuit Court Judge certainly motivated her to pursue a career in law, she recalled. After graduating from the University of Wisconsin-Madison, she attended The John Marshall Law School in Chicago and also studied law at Uppsala Universitet in Sweden. Her passion for international law was born of her family’s history—her grandparents’ ship manifests evidencing their arrival to Ellis Island in 1923 adorn the wall in her chambers and, she added, serve as a constant reminder of her grandparents’ hardship in immigrating to the United States.

Like her father and mother, Judge Hoogasian served as a county prosecutor when she graduated from law school. Her interest in environmental law then led her to a position with the Illinois Pollution Control Commission where she served as a hearing officer writing hundreds of decisions. In 1999, she joined the U.S. Department of Homeland Security, Immigration and Customs Enforcement as a prosecutor. Looking to broaden her experience, Judge Hoogasian then served as chief counsel to Illinois-based Uline Inc., a privately-held, billion-dollar company, launching and managing its in-house legal department. In 2010, Judge Hoogasian applied for and was appointed a U.S. Immigration Judge in San Francisco, California where she currently serves. Throughout her career, Judge Hoogasian has taken the time to mentor law students and attorneys. She maintained that the decision to become a judge was not necessarily part of an overall plan but makes sense now as she looks back and connects the dots—even tracing the dots back to the steps her Armenian grandparents and Finnish ancestors took to come to America. Judge Hoogasian said it reminded her of a quote from Steve Jobs, who once said, “[y]ou can’t connect the dots looking forward; you can only connect them looking backward. So you have to trust that the dots will somehow connect in your future.” So true, in the case of Judge Hoogasian.
Hon. Dickran M. Tevrizian, Jr. (Ret.)

Former U.S. Federal District Judge for the Central District of California

“I was a big fan of the Andy Hardy movies starring Mickey Rooney,” said Judge Tevrizian, “where Andy Hardy’s father was a Judge, and I thought that was really cool.” Judge Tevrizian was only 31 years old when he joined the California municipal bench after having made partner at the Law Offices of Kirtland and Packard only two years earlier. He served on the Los Angeles Municipal Bench for 4 years and then in the Superior Court for 6 years. He was appointed by President Ronald Reagan as a United States Federal District Court Judge for the Central District of California in 1985. Today, he is retired from the federal bench and, in addition to being a mediator/arbitrator with JAMS, he serves on the legal advisory board for Legal Zoom and the AGBU.

His advice to aspiring attorneys was specific: “Go to college and get a technical background in science, computer science, medicine, or chemical engineering.” He insisted that diverse course experience is essential and, moreover, that law schools and the legal profession are looking for people with technical and engineering backgrounds. Interestingly, after law school Judge Tevrizian worked for the accounting firm of Arthur Andersen before beginning his career in law. He believes that the legal profession is in need for more stability and more professionalism and that a change in such direction is necessary.

Judge Tevrizian’s efforts to assist the Armenian Bar Association and mentor numerous Armenian lawyers has been important to bringing cohesion to, and awareness of, the Armenian legal community, particularly in southern California. That said, he views the contributions of the Armenian community to the American society in a broader context: “Our contributions are no different from the other ethnic communities with regard to the cultural contributions they made to make America a diverse mosaic of interests.” And his advice for what the Armenian community must do moving forward is as pragmatic as it is aspirational: “We need to reduce the number of Armenian defendants in the criminal justice system.” Together with our achievements as Armenian-Americans, there are certainly difficulties we must face—and this particular challenge weighs heavily on the mind of Judge Tevrizian.

Afterword

As we reflect on these thoughts, we should not forget how fortunate we are as an Armenian Bar Association to have among us judges in the federal system whose stories show us the possibility of achievement within the greater American legal community and whose consciences remain steadfast on the challenges we face as Armenian-Americans. We thank each of the judges for allowing us the opportunity to bring their stories to you in this first installment, and we trust you have found these brief insights meaningful. We look forward to our forthcoming second installment, bringing you our interview with U.S. Federal District Court Judge Der- Yeghiayan, in a future issue of the newsletter.

* We have selected to employ the phrase “judges with the federal legal system” rather than “federal judges” in referring to our interviewees collectively since not all of our interviewees are Article III federal judges. We have reserved the phrase “Federal Judge” for Article III judges, such as the U.S. Federal District Court Judges, as only they must be appointed by the U.S. President and confirmed by the U.S. Senate.

** The interviews above proceeded with the following pairings, Judge Larry Burns with Vanna Kitsinian, Judge Claire Cecchi with Scott A. Ohnegian, Judge Jacqueline Chooljian with Saro Kerkonian and Lucy Varpetian, Judge Amy Hoogasian with Haig Baghdassarian, and Judge Dickran Tevrizian with Tina Odjaghian. All of the interviews were edited by staff of the Newsletter for publication. The Forward was written by Karnig Kerkonian.
Karnig Kerkonian, from Chicago, is a distinguished graduate magna cum laude of Harvard University who holds two law degrees—a Doctorate in Law from the University of Chicago and a post-doctoral Diploma in International Law from Cambridge University, England. Since 1999, Karnig has represented numerous U.S. companies and multinational entities in transactional matters as well as complex business litigation matters. He is well-recognized for his work in international law, both public and private, and has been tapped as specialized counsel in cross-border matters as well as a leading speaker before law associations on various international legal issues.

Haig Baghdassarian, from San Francisco, is the principal attorney of the Law Office of Haig Baghdassarian. He has extensive experience advising clients and litigating labor and employment, municipal law, and governmental relations matters. Haig also has an active immigration law practice, handling most aspects of immigration issues, including asylum claims, family-based petitions and employment and investor-based immigration matters. He is a graduate of Hastings Law School.

Vanna Kitsinian, from Los Angeles, who is a member of the Armenian Bar’s Board of Governors, is a graduate of Pepperdine University School of Law, where she was a member of the Law Review. Vanna’s practice is in civil litigation matters with an emphasis on pharmaceutical liability, product liability and personal injury cases.

Tina Odjaghian, from Los Angeles, who is the newest member of the Armenian Bar’s Board of Governors, practices workers’ compensation litigation with an emphasis on complex and high-stakes brain injury litigation. Tina also represents a select group of insurance companies and self-insured employers in workers’ compensation matters. She is a graduate of Loyola Law School.

Scott A. Ohnegian, from northern New Jersey, is co-chair of Riker Danzig Scherer Hyland Perretti, LLP’s Labor & Employment Group. He focuses on the representation of management in litigating federal and state employment matters including claims involving allegations of discrimination, whistleblowing, harassment, Sarbanes-Oxley retaliation, misappropriation of trade secrets and restrictive covenant claims.

Chairman’s Message

Continued from page 1

When Armenia was not yet free and independent, and when Diasporan Armenians had not yet charged forward into the legal profession, the founding members of the Armenian Bar set their sights upon the dawning of a new era, in Armenia and at home. Before them opened a broad horizon of challenges and opportunities, both familiar and of first instance, and they acted with tenacity, integrity, and vision.

The issues facing our people in the homeland and in dispersion continue to require professional insight, individual accomplishment, and collective strength. The Armenian Bar is specially placed to become the pivot point in the definition and execution of the Armenian agenda, now and in the future. Our members are to be recognized for their contributions to community life and homeland development, for defying the odds against which Armenian institutions are born, and for coming together in the most meaningful of ways.

Every story has its beginning, and ours starts with you, taking into account from whom and from where you came. You are all part of the winding road that connects to the first of your families who were forced to leave their homes on their ancestral lands. Wherever they went, wherever your bloodline found its way, they often claimed little, if any, material belongings. But what they did possess was a sturdy set of principles, values and ethics, which have become yours to keep and to pass on.

Those family firsts had every reason to give up, but instead, they climbed to higher ground, taking no shortcuts, accepting no handouts, receiving no charity, never giving up. That first generation was a nation—our nation—of builders who used integrity and devotion to build fortresses of family and community with bricks of honor and mortars of pride. We are blessed to be in a position to add to that foundation by combining the best of the Armenian heritage with the noblest of professions.

While the Armenian Bar tries to ensure that the promises of democracy remain alive and available for those who still hunger for opportunity and thirst for justice, we have another major constituency—the constituency of a million and half, of generations lost, of a people dispossessed, of a homeland forlorn. With so much lost, we must continue to stand and deliver together—in their name and in their memory—truth, dignity, and justice.

Between historic Armenia and your current locations, for many of you, the first of your families were blessed with the gifts of life and ties of community in far-off cities which, in certain ways, are still considered home. Those places, from Istanbul, Beirut, and Tehran, to Yerevan, Gyumri, and beyond, form the backdrop of the amazing stories of your families’ survival and success.

My own grandparents came to America both just before and immediately after the Genocide, and right away they got down to the unglorified work of straightening their posture and strengthening their backbone. While my family began the rebuilding process in the orchards and vineyards of Fresno and Tulare, many others did the same in the Washburn and Moen wire factory in Worcester, in the Hood Rubber Company in Watertown, in the shoe factories and metal working plants of Boston, Lynn, Chelsea and Cambridge, in the iron and steel mills of Granite City and Waukegan, on the assembly lines of Detroit’s automakers, as tanners in the leather tanneries of Chicago, in the storefronts and kiosks on Manhattan’s lower east side, in the shirt and collar shops of Troy, Syracuse, and Binghamton, in the textile industries of Hartford and New Haven, Providence and Pawtucket, and Camden and Patterson, and while tending the furnaces in St. Catharines and Gault.

While many today see success as equivalent to power and prestige, success back then—real success—was measured not so much by the fame and fortune they achieved in life, but by the obstacles they overcame while trying to keep the dream ample and accessible to their children and grandchildren.

In you as their children and grandchildren, and with you as the wonderful members of the Armenian Bar Association, they certainly succeeded.
Manzanar

Continued from page 2

Each unit appeared to be about 500 square feet and housed eight people. Different families shared these tight quarters. So, for example, one family of four would share a unit with another family of four. During the tour, Rose shared facts about Manzanar and illustrated what daily life there was like.

We then had free time to explore Manzanar on our own. Some chose to spend time in the visitor center exploring its historical exhibition on the Japanese American experience. I chose to explore Manzanar’s grounds. I saw a reconstructed mess hall, the remains of building foundations, and the remains of man-made Japanese-style gardens around the campsite. The day was capped with a powerful pilgrimage to the Manzanar cemetery, the site of the famous white obelisk monument with the Japanese words “i-rei-to” (or “soul-consoling tower”) written on it. Standing before the monument with nothing but the Sierra Nevada mountains as a backdrop, while contemplating those who died while incarcerated in Manzanar, was deeply moving.

I will never forget this trip to Manzanar. To have shared the experience with members of the Armenian American community, who were (and are) passionate about Japanese American history, made it all the more special. Along the way, I made new friendships, solidified old ones, and learned about Armenian history and culture. In 2015, the Armenian community will be commemorating the centennial anniversary of the Armenian Genocide.

Just as the Armenian Bar Association did for us, I hope that members of the Japanese American Bar Association will take some time to understand and appreciate the history of the Armenian community. The study of history, after all, promotes understanding between different communities. By studying our collective past, we can better understand the present and hopefully push for a better tomorrow.

Steve Yoda is a managing associate with Orrick, Herrington & Sutcliffe LLP’s Orange County office. He has represented corporate and individual clients in a wide array of complex civil and criminal matters involving insurance, intellectual property, securities, employment issues, business torts, real estate, contracts and professional malpractice. From 2004 to 2005, he served as a law clerk to the Honorable James Ware, United States District Judge for the Northern District of California. He currently serves as the President of the Japanese American Bar Association. He also has served on the Boards of the Asian Pacific American Bar Association and the Los Angeles County Bar Association.

On November 19, 2014, during the Annual Meeting of the Japanese American Bar Association, Armenian Bar members Lucy Varpetian and Saro Kerkonian were invited to share their thoughts about the pilgrimage to Manzanar.
Los Angeles Superior Court Presiding Judge David Wesley has been described at a dinner meeting of the Armenian Bar Association as a man possessed of “dominating humility.”

Wesley was honored by the association on Wednesday, along with Los Angeles Superior Court Judge Kevin C. Brazile and Immigration Judge Ashley Tabaddor, with the U.S. Department of Justice Executive Office for Immigration Review. The occasion was the group’s third annual “Judge’s Night.”

More than 200 persons were seated at tables in the banquet room of a mid-eastern restaurant in Glendale, with the capacity of 180. They heard the association’s immediate past chair, Encino criminal defense attorney Garo B. Ghazarian, say of Wesley:

“What is decisive and impressive about his functioning on the court is his general attitude toward law, the habits of mind he has formed, the capacity for detachment, and his temperament, and training for putting his passion behind his judgment instead of in front of it. “The attitudes and qualities which I am groping to characterize here, and describe Judge Wesley with, are ingredients in what compendiously might be called dominating humility.

“That’s right. Dominating humility.”

Wesley Expresses Optimism

Wesley decried the deep budget cuts the court has incurred over the past five years, yet expressed “great Continued on page 12
optimism” for the court’s immediate future. He told the audience, which included about 50 judges:

“We know that access to justice is a fundamental expectation of all Californians—people just take it for granted and expect that judges, following the law, will punish the wrongdoers, resolve family disputes in a fair and just manner, enforce contracts, protect children and others who cannot protect themselves, and ensure people’s rights as they do so.

“I knew when I ran for assistant presiding judge four years ago that in the years ahead, these fundamental expectations of all the citizens of Los Angeles would be a great challenge.

“The court’s budget is already being cut, and more cuts seem likely.

“But it’s a challenge that I embraced—that I embraced because I had faith in the judges and staff of your Superior Court to weather any storm and overcome any crisis.”

Wesley said that the Los Angeles Superior Court has had to “find a way to operate with $187 million less in our budget” than five years ago.

While court revenues have dwindled, he pointed out, caseloads have burgeoned.

In 2008, he noted, the court handled about 2.5 million cases, in 58 courthouses, with 6,000 employees; by the end of this year, it will have handled about 3 million cases, in 38 courthouses, staffed by 4,250 employees.

“But in spite of the growing caseloads and the lack of funds,” the presiding judge said, “one thing remains clear: The courts of Los Angeles will not and cannot ration justice by restricting rights of our citizens. We are committed to preserving the rule of law in all areas of litigation.”

The court is, he advised, “restructuring,” expanding online services and otherwise utilizing technology to cut costs. This includes, he mentioned, replacing all 6,000 phones, most of which are from the 1970s, at a savings of $2.5 million a year.

“I am sure that we will emerge from the trauma of the last five years a more vibrant and energized court, with far better and more efficient environment in which lawyers can use their skills,” Wesley declared.

He said that he ends his term as presiding judge “a little tired, but filled with great optimism for the future of our court,” adding:

“I have great confidence in the extraordinary intellect and exceptional leadership of my fantastic partner, Presiding Judge-Elect Carolyn Kuhl.”

Wesley received a framed commendation from the group which terms him “a pillar of California’s judicial system,” and lauds “his superlative standard of integrity” and “warmth, compassion, and sincerity.”

Hovannisian’s Remarks

Earlier in the program, the Armenian Bar Association’s president, Armen K. Hovannisian, a Sherman Oaks attorney who had previously served as the group’s chief, remarked:

“We take our work very seriously at the Armenian Bar Association because we are among the very few who are given the gift of life when so many members of our families were given the curse of death during the Armenian genocide.”

(Mass slayings of Armenians occurred in the Ottoman (Turkish) Empire, beginning in 1915. Between 1 to 1.5 million Armenians were put to death.)

Notwithstanding a background of terror, Hovannisian said, “We are a happy people,” adding:

“We are an optimistic people. And…some of you who have known us for more than a few days know that we can be a rambunctious lot.

“I have to say that when we Armenians get together, we seem to be animated, and proud, and opinionated—but as soon as we get into the larger, non-Armenian community…we take on your grandmothers’ quiet humility, their hushed expressions….

“But exercising a chairman’s prerogative today, I will tell you that at least for tonight, mixed company or not…we’ll be proud, we’ll be opinionated, we’ll be animated, and we’ll be happy.”

This article has been reprinted in part from the SNIPPETS Column that appeared in the November 3, 2014 issue of the Metropolitan News Enterprise. To see the full article, go to: http://www.metnews.com/articles/2014/snippets110114.htm

To see more photos of this event, visit: https://www.armenianbar.com/galleries/2014/judges-night/
The Scholarship Committee of the Armenian Bar Association has been hard at work preparing for what can only be described as a banner year for the committee’s worthy endeavors. “Since its inception, the Armenian Bar Association has had as one of its pillars of organizational purpose the promotion and fostering of legal education,” said multi-term Chairwoman of the Scholarship Committee, attorney Christine Engustian of Providence, Rhode Island.

The Scholarship Committee is charged with the responsibility of reviewing the annual applications submitted to the Association for its scholarship awards and making a recommendation to the Association’s Board of Governors of those applicants who should receive the awards in that year. Armenian Bar Association Chairman, Armen Hovannisian, recently stated, “We are proud that over the years through the generosity of our members, the Armenian Bar Association has made a difference in the lives of the most promising and deserving law students in Armenia and the Diaspora, to help them with the daunting financial obligations that come with a law school education. We owe a debt of gratitude to our committee members who volunteer countless hours reviewing the dozens of applications we receive each year for our annual scholarship.”

In addition to Chairwoman Engustian, the committee is comprised of Association members and attorneys Laura Karabulut of Toronto, Canada, Elizabeth Al-Dajani of Chicago and Lara Kayayan of Los Angeles.

“This year and in every year to come hereafter, the Scholarship Committee will carry the mantle and the legacy of a giant of the Armenian Bar Association, its late Chairman Emeritus, Vicken I. Simonian,” continued Chairman Hovannisian. At the Armenian Bar Association Annual Meeting in New York City, it was unanimously resolved by the Board of Governors of the Association that the Association’s Scholarship Fund will include the name and memory of Vicken I. Simonian. “At the request of the Simonian family, a scholarship fund was established in lieu of flowers at the time of Vicken’s passing. As a result, there has been a tremendous outpouring by friends and family in support of the Armenian Bar Association Scholarship Fund, which will ensure that we will continue Vicken’s commitment to educating our youth for years and years to come,” explained Chairman Hovannisian.

The annual selection process begins when the scholarship application is posted on the Association’s website, which is typically at the end of a calendar year or the beginning of the following year, containing the submission deadline of March 31st. The application provides specific guidelines on eligibility for the scholarship and the documentation that must supplement the application. Concurrently with the posting of the application on the ArmenBar website, a press release regarding the Association’s scholarship application and submission deadline is published in the Armenian newspapers or given to certain organizations, schools or entities that would likely reach candidates for the scholarship awards.

The committee carefully reviews each completed and timely application and then, through consensus of its members, selects nominees for the awards. The committee then drafts a biographical sketch for each award nominee. The names and bios of the nominees are provided to the Board of Governors for its review and decision. The Association then makes the announcement of its selection of scholarship winners by first sending a letter to every applicant, congratulating the recipients and thanking all applicants for their interest in the Association. The Association also places the scholarship recipients’ names and bios on its website and has in the past published the granting of the awards in Armenian media outlets.

The total monetary amount earmarked for scholarships each year is generally in the range of $2,000 to $3,000, which is typically divided among at least two scholarship recipients. However, it is the committee’s recommendation to the Board of Governors that will often influence the Board’s determination of the total monetary award and number of worthy recipients in any given scholarship cycle.

“We are thrilled that every year the Armenian Bar Association is helping to make the dreams of a legal education and a career in law a reality for so many students through our scholarships. These students are our future and they deserve our support. We are especially enthused that that this year and in the years to come the awardees will remember our beloved Chairman Emeritus Vicken I. Simonian, a true believer in the priceless benefit of a legal education and a mentor and coach to so many. It is fitting and right that we honor his legacy through the Armenian Bar Association Scholarship,” concluded Committee Chairwoman Engustian.

To participate in the Scholarship Committee, please contact Christine Engustian at CJEngustian@gmail.com
The Executive Committee of the Armenian Bar Association is proud to announce that Vartges Saroyan of New York is the first recipient of the Association’s Public Service Grant Program.

Through the very generous financial commitment of attorney Souren Israelyan, an active member from New York City, the Armenian Bar Association created a special grant to fund student loan forgiveness for those Armenian attorneys who are public servants in the State of New York.

Armenian Bar Co-Vice-Chairman Gary Moomjian stated that: “The purpose of the Fund is to appreciate the sacrifices and the services of those attorneys of Armenian descent who have chosen public service for the greater good and support them in repaying their student loans.”

A 2012 graduate of Cardozo Law School in New York, Mr. Saroyan is currently Assistant Chief Counsel at the Department of Homeland Security – Immigration and Customs Enforcement. Prior thereto, he worked at the Department of Justice, US Attorney’s Office, Eastern District of NY, Forfeiture Support Services. He is married, with 2 children. For the Cardozo Journal of Conflict Resolution, Mr. Saroyan wrote an impressive article entitled “A Lesson From the Holocaust Restitution Movement for Armenians: Generate Momentum to Secure Restitution.” The article may be read at: http://cardozojcr.com/vol13no1/Saroyan.pdf.

Armenian Bar Association Chairman Armen Hovannisian thanked the generosity of Mr. Israelyan in seeing the need to reward those who choose the honorable path of dedicating their careers to public service. In a recent interview, Mr. Hovannisian stated that “Mr. Saroyan has distinguished himself as entirely deserving of the award. Through his work at the Department of Homeland Security, Mr. Saroyan has demonstrated his commitment to securing our nation and serving the public good. At the same time, he has served the Armenian Cause in the most tangible of ways by his outstanding scholarship on the effective steps the Armenian people can take to gain momentum in the quest for reparations relating to the Armenian Genocide.”

Moomjian wrapped up with the following thoughts, “[w]e salute Mr. Saroyan for a job well done and hope that this modest grant will assist in easing the indebtedness which he incurred while obtaining his education. We look forward to awarding other worthy candidates in years to come.”

Danielle M. Peterson, of East Norwich, was elected as Judge of the Nassau County Family Court, with over 155,000 votes, on November 4. Since 2010, Peterson has been a Principal Law Clerk for Nassau County Supreme Court Justice Anthony L. Parga. Before that, Peterson was a trial attorney in private practice from 2000 to 2010. She received her bachelor’s degree, Cum Laude, from the University of Delaware in 1997, where she was Phi Beta Kappa, and she received her law degree from Hofstra University School of Law in 2000. Peterson is a member of the Armenian Bar Association, the Nassau County Bar Association, where she serves on the We Care Advisory Board, the New York State Bar Association, and the New York State Academy of Trial Lawyers. Peterson is the daughter of two Armenian parents, Gregory Peterson and Linda Karanfilian Peterson, and her family includes husband, Antonio Marino, and infant son, Gregory.
MEET TINA ODJAGHIAN, THE NEWEST MEMBER OF THE BOARD OF GOVERNORS

The Board of Governors of the Armenian Bar Association welcomes Tina Odjaghian to the governing body. Tina’s practice areas include workers’ compensation litigation with an emphasis on complex and high-stakes brain injury litigation. During the course of her legal career, Tina has obtained over $25 million in settlements and awards on behalf of brain-injured workers. On the defense side, she represents a select group of insurance companies and self-insured employers in workers’ compensation matters including defense of California Labor Code section 132(a) (discriminatory discharge) claims.

Prior to entering private practice, Tina served as a legal extern to the Honorable Judge Dickran Tevrizian of the U.S. District Court, Central District. She also benefited from participating in her mentor’s well-known proactive approach to achieving efficient and effective resolutions of seemingly unsettled disputes. She now draws on this experience in negotiating top-dollar settlements on behalf of her catastrophically-injured clients.

Tina earned her Juris Doctorate from Loyola Law School in Los Angeles. She is a certified course instructor licensed by the California Department of Insurance. Tina was named in the Los Angeles Magazine’s list of Southern California Super Lawyers - Rising Stars, consecutively for 2011, 2012, and 2013 featuring “Outstanding Young Lawyers in Southern California.”

“We look forward to the encouraging prospect of having Tina’s professional sophistication, her devotion to the Armenian community, and her can-do approach as important complements to our already-outstanding leadership group,” said Armen K. Hovannisian, Chairman of the Board.

Tina is serving out the balance of Judge Amy Hoogasian’s term, which will open for the general membership’s consideration and vote at the next annual meeting, tentatively scheduled to take place in Los Angeles in June, 2015. “Judge Hoogasian made wonderful and permanent contributions to the Armenian Bar, raising its stature and deepening the camaraderie among all of us,” Hovannisian said.

STUDENT AFFAIRS COMMITTEE SETS UP SHOP AT LOYOLA LAW SCHOOL

On Saturday, November 15, 2014, volunteers from the Armenian Bar Association were welcomed by the Armenian Law Students Association (ALSA) of Loyola Law School at its second annual Resume Writing and Interview Preparation Workshop. The purpose of the event was for the students to receive from seasoned professionals an array of constructive pointers and professional precision about the conduct of interviews and the craft of resume writing.

With the organizational efforts of Board Member and Student Affairs Committee Chair Hovanes Margarian, veteran Armenian Bar members Fred Mesropi, Tigran Palyan, and Alice Yar-dum-Hunter introduced the students’ to a primer on career-enhancing practicalities, taking them from the realm of classroom theories to workplace realities.

“Perfecting interviewing skills is crucial to the students’ success and the positive feedback we receive from them reinforces our commitment to continue participating in such programs,” stated Fred Mesropi.

“This event was initiated last year to give our students a competitive advantage in the harsh job market,” stated Hovanes Margarian. “The Armenian Bar Association aims to empower and enrich the future generation of attorneys because the success of its individuals resonates in the strength of our Association and our common cause.”

The morning began with an hour of mingling, while the 20-something (both the students’ ages and numbers in attendance) had coffee and breakfast to fortify their attention to the important discussions which ensued. After hearing from the panelists, the attorneys gathered in different areas of the conference room and students took turns meeting with them one-on-one, for approximately 5-10 minutes each, to have their individual resumes critiqued and to receive more personalized direction about interview techniques.

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CREATIVE CORNER

FROM ONE LAWYER TO ANOTHER
AN OPEN LETTER TO FRANCIS SCOTT KEY FROM ANN M. LOUSIN

Dear Frank: You were a real lawyer. Though best known for your ode to our beloved “Star-Spangled Banner,” few today know that you spent your entire adult life as a well-respected member of our legal profession. Born to a wealthy family in Maryland and the beneficiary of a splendid education, you were a very successful lawyer by the time you turned 35, in 1814.

You were the United States District Attorney for Maryland for several years. You had a thriving practice in Georgetown, then part of Maryland, that featured dozens of appearances before the Supreme Court of the United States. You were a “lawyer’s lawyer.”

You usually handled commercial and real estate transactions, but you were also a trial lawyer. You represented both slaveholders and freedmen. You owned slaves, but thought slavery was wrong. You, who saw America as “the land of the free,” helped establish schools for free Blacks.

When the War of 1812 came to Baltimore, Maryland, the American authorities needed a lawyer who could approach the Royal Navy ships anchored near the city. They needed someone with diplomatic skills to persuade the British to release Dr. William Beanes, an elderly Maryland physician who had been taken as a prisoner of war. This task required a skilled negotiator, and negotiation is what we lawyers do very well. The authorities chose you and your fellow-lawyer John Stuart Skinner to sail to the British fleet under a flag of truce and negotiate for the release of the physician.

In early September, 1814, you two sailed to the British ships and began negotiations on behalf of your client. Although you were successful, the British would not permit your ship to return to Baltimore because they were about to bombard Fort McHenry, the fort guarding Baltimore. During the long hours of the battle, your little ship was tied to a British ship. Although you, Skinner, and Beanes were under guard, you could view Baltimore Harbor and Fort McHenry.

You could barely see through the haze and smoke of the battle. The large American flag that flew over Fort McHenry was barely discernible at sunset on September 13, 1814. As the British and American cannons exchanged volleys and the rockets burst in the air, a thunderstorm broke. Lightning and thunder matched the cannon and rockets in light and noise. It seemed impossible that the fort could hold out and that the flag would still be flying the next morning.

As the sun rose on the morning of Wednesday, September 14, 1814, you could barely see Fort McHenry through the smoke. After more than twenty hours of shelling, the fort still stood. Moreover, the British had decided to withdraw.

Best of all, the battle-scarred piece of cloth was still hanging from the fort’s flagpole. When a breeze caught it, you could see that the American flag was still flying over Fort McHenry. It was a miracle!

You, a lawyer by profession, summoned up your inner poet and began to sketch a poem on the back of a letter. You wrote a poem about that flag: “Oh, say can you see by the dawn’s early light what so proudly we hailed at the twilight’s last gleaming?”

Shortly thereafter, the British allowed your ship to return to Baltimore. Your mission was accomplished. But something more wonderful was happening. You re-worked your poem about the flag over Fort McHenry, and within days your poem was known throughout Baltimore. You decided to set your words to the music of a gentlemen’s club drinking song that an Englishman, John Stafford Smith, had set down on paper. You liked the music and thought it went well with your four stanzas of the ode to the flag.

Let’s face it, Frank. You did not write the Great American Poem. Your lyrics are tough to follow, and the music is even harder to sing. But the combination is magnificent. The marriage of your words and Smith’s music is perfect. The words and music reach our hearts and souls as no other song can.

Most important, you made the flag the center of American patriotism. We pledge loyalty to our country by saying, “I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America and to the republic for which it stands...” No other people regard their flag the way we do. That was your doing, Frank.

You called our flag “the star-spangled banner.” Today we also call it “the stars and stripes,” “Old Glory,” or “the grand old flag, that high-flying flag.” And we sing the national anthem you wrote on special occasions.

Our national song is unique. The British ask God to save their monarch. The French exhort the children of the fatherland to rise up. But, thanks to you, Frank, we Americans have asked for almost two hundred years if we can still see the flag flying. When we travel around the world, we feel a sense of pride and security when we see our flag flying over American embassies.

Frank, the flag is still flying. And we’re still here.

The author thanks Christine Saba and Victor Salas for their assistance.

A version of this article appeared in the September 11, 2014 issue of The Chicago Daily Law Bulletin.

Ann M. Lousin has been a professor at the John Marshall Law School since 1975. She served as Chairperson of the Armenian Bar Association from 1995-1998. You may reach her at 7lousin@jmls.edu.

Editors’ Comment:
This year marks the bicentennial of the Battle at Fort McHenry. Fort McHenry, in Baltimore, Maryland, is the coastal star-shaped fort best known for its role in the War of 1812, when it successfully defended Baltimore Harbor from an attack by the British navy in Chesapeake Bay September 13-14, 1814.
MONTEBELLO, CALIFORNIA-

Dozens of lawyers, law students, and community members gathered on September 18, 2014, to participate in a free legal clinic reaching deep into the Armenian community of Southern California.

“We want to let the community know that we are fully invested in it, and ready to meet their needs,” said Haig Siranosian, a member of the Montebello “Vahan Cardashian” chapter of the Armenian Youth Federation (AYF).

The clinic took place at the local Armenian Center and was hosted by AYF Montebello in collaboration with the Armenian Bar Association and the Pepperdine University School of Law’s Armenian Law Students’ Association (ALSA).

Armen K Hovannisian, Chairman of the Armenian Bar Association, stated, “With the rising currents of devotion of our world-class members, the Armenian Bar Association has developed into a lightning rod of positive energy. We continue to fulfill one of our primary missions of offering legal guidance to those in need. This time, we had the privilege of being welcomed into one of the most storied Southern California communities—Montebello. This is where another generation now stands proud and humble in the long shadow of earlier pioneers who helped build the iconic Genocide Monument more than 45 years ago.”

Attorneys from the Armenian Bar Association offered hours of free legal consultations in the fields of immigration, landlord/tenant, labor, criminal law and other areas, conducted in both English and Armenian.

Pepperdine’s ALSA, along with law school students of different backgrounds from Southwestern Law School, Loyola Law School and other areas schools, assisted community members in communicating their legal issues with the attorneys.

“The collaborative effort between the Armenian Bar Association, the AYF, and the ALSA enabled us to serve the Montebello community and help people in a way we couldn’t as individual organizations. We hope to continue co-programming and innovating ways to serve local communities,” stated Tatev Oganyan, President of Pepperdine’s ALSA.

The organizers felt that Armenian refugees who fled from upheavals in Syria and Iraq would particularly need legal services as they navigate the complex immigration system of the United States. And, in fact, several of the public participants came with immigration-related questions related to their and their families’ exodus from these regions.

“Because of the cycles of dispersion caused by the Genocide and its aftermath, our compatriots have found it necessary to emigrate to new countries,” Hovannisian of the Armenian Bar Association explained. “When they arrive in America, we will be waiting to meet them with what they will need to know about their legal rights and responsibilities. I am particularly moved by the great commitment of our partners in this community-betterment effort, namely the law students and the young men and women of the Armenian Youth Federation.”

The legal clinic with the Armenian Bar Association is part of a larger goal among AYF Western Region chapters to make a positive impact in their local communities. AYF chapters currently

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SOUTHWESTERN LAW SCHOOL’S ARMENIAN LAW STUDENTS ASSOCIATION WELCOMES THE 2014-2015 ACADEMIC YEAR BY HOSTING ALL ALSA MIXER

On Thursday, September 25, 2014, Southwestern Law School’s Armenian Law Students Association (ALSA) hosted its first mixer of the 2014-2015 academic year at Perch’s rooftop lounge in downtown Los Angeles, with a stunning rooftop view of the glittering downtown Los Angeles skyline.

More than 75 Armenian-American students from UCLA, USC, Loyola, Pepperdine, and Whittier law schools were in attendance. The gathering was an exciting opportunity for students to network and share their law school experience with one another. ALSA board members also discussed plans of collaborating with each other on future projects.

ALSA at Southwestern was formed by students of Armenian heritage in an effort to provide a forum for discussion of common interests as well as provide its members with opportunities for both academic and professional advancement. ALSA also provides an essential avenue for students to meet and establish contacts with other association members as well as members of the legal community. The law schools represented at this event boast a combined total of over 300 law students of Armenian descent.

Community Outreach

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offer services ranging from weekly special-needs basketball programs to community health fairs in Pasadena.

Founded in 1933, the Armenian Youth Federation works to advance the social, political, educational and cultural awareness of Armenian youth.

The Armenian Bar Association was formed in 1989 to provide an arena for lawyers of Armenian heritage to come together socially and professionally and to address the legal concerns of the Armenian community.

The Armenian Law Students’ Association at Pepperdine University School of Law is dedicated to enriching Pepperdine’s community understanding and appreciation for Armenian history and culture. The ALSA works closely with Armenian organizations at California law schools and universities to expand, strengthen and establish professional ties in the Armenian legal community.

Loyola Law School
Continued from page 15

The event was advertised and promoted at other Southern California ALSAs, as well as broadcast to other organizations on Loyola’s campus. Pateel Tavidian, who currently serves as the Vice President of Loyola’s ALSA, stated, “We believe this is a really important and useful event for all students, especially 1L’s, because it puts us in a much better position to apply successfully for employment after graduation. We thank the Armenian Bar Association for its continued commitment to its future generation of members and leaders.”

Both Pateel Tavidian and Sarkis Atoyan, the President of the Loyola ALSA, are 3L’s. “While we won’t be here to repeat this event next year, we do hope it grows in the coming years and students take advantage of it as much as they can,” Tavidian concluded.
For the past several months, Ashod Mooradian, Senior Trial Counsel for the State Bar of California, has redirected his focus from the misdeeds of practicing attorneys to the good deeds of future members of the bar.

Mr. Mooradian set his sights on an amazingly receptive and rewarding audience and actors. Rather than the usual adversarial resistance which he encounters during his primary working hours, Mooradian has found only optimism and positive developments during his second shifts. That’s because of the refreshing appearance of a new generation of promising and curious high school students as he guides them, with the assistance of Newsletter Editor Lucy Varpetian, through intensive preparation for participation in a mock trial program at his alma mater, the Mesrobian School in Pico Rivera, CA.

But it’s never as easy and effortless as it sounds.

Mooradian shot for the stars right from the start, wanting his team to compete in the national competition organized by the highly-reputed Constitutional Rights Foundation, instead of opting to keep the education in-house and within classroom walls. This required that he secure the endorsement of the school principal, a teacher sponsor and, at minimum, nine students who wanted to learn about the American legal system, on top of their regular and rigorous school curriculum.

With the unwavering support of Principal David Ghoogasian and Mr. Neill Dodd, the nine students got off to a strong start. They gushed with enthusiasm, but what they had little of was time. The competition requires participants to enact courtroom and trial roles, to learn about legal concepts and to create and deliver persuasive arguments. The attorney coaches advise the students on general trial techniques and procedures as well as on specific strategies for the given hypothetical case.

Teams of students from dozens of Southern California high schools—many from the ranks of the most prestigious private and public institutions—present in actual courtrooms the trial record from the alternative perspectives of the prosecution and the defense. Mock trial team members internalize and project the complete spectrum of participants in an actual trial, including donning the personas of attorneys, witnesses, clerks, and bailiffs.

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FETHIYE CETIN, TURKISH-ARMENIAN HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVIST, HONORED BY THE UNITED ARMENIAN COUNCIL OF LOS ANGELES

Fethiye Cetin, the attorney for the late Hrant Dink and a prominent human rights activist, was the honoree at a banquet held on November 15, 2014 at the Center of the Organization of Istanbul Armenians in Reseda, California.

The event was organized by the United Armenian Council of Los Angeles (“UACLA”), which is a collaborative of more than 60 local Armenian organizations whose mission is to coordinate Genocide commemoration-related events and, more broadly, to promote commonly shared Armenian interests in the community. The Armenian Bar Association is a participating member of the UACLA.

The evening’s program included opening remarks by Armenian Bar’s own Saro Kerkonian, who welcomed Cetin and applauded her commitment to the forging of human rights in Turkey. Fellow Armenian Bar member Edvin Minassian translated Cetin’s presentation for the capacity audience. Several other Armenian Bar members also were on hand.

A native of the Elazig province of Turkey (more commonly known to Armenians as the Kharpert province of historic Armenia), Cetin provided a remarkable account of her youth, and how the singular revelation while she was a law student at Ankara University that her grandmother was an Armenian changed her life path. Cetin, who endured three years in prison in the 1980’s for opposing the military regime in Turkey, attributes her becoming a leading human rights activist to that revelation.

Cetin discussed the cycle of emotions stemming from the news that she had Armenian roots, including confusion, shame and anger, and how ultimately those emotions drove her to seek justice. She noted, “Having seen the ruins of the Armenian Church as we grew up, I had never asked myself the question, ‘who were these people that lived here and attended this Church, and what happened to them?’ until I discovered my grandmother’s identity. That was shameful.” Cetin added that she is hopeful that a new generation is asking these questions, and knows that for the sake of healing, “…the Armenian Genocide needs to be accepted and steps be taken towards providing justice, and only then can we remove this albatross from our necks.”

As a reflection of her commitment to the advancement of human rights in Turkey and beyond, Cetin has served as the executive board member of the Human Rights Center of the Istanbul Bar Association and speaker of its Minority Rights Working Group. She founded the monitoring group “History for Peace,” which aims to eradicate racist, discriminatory and hostile elements from school textbooks.

Still more, Cetin is an accomplished author. Her book My Grandmother has been translated into French, English, Eastern Armenian, Western Armenian, Italian, Flemish, Bulgarian, Greek, German, Romanian and Arabic. Together with Professor Aysegul Altinay, she also co-authored the book Grandchildren, which chronicles the stories of discovery by various individuals in Turkey who are grandchildren of Armenians. Her most recent book, I feel Shame! The Judicial Process of the Murder of Hrant Dink, traces the long and convoluted legal process of the prosecution - or the lack thereof - of those responsible for the murder, and the evidence she has discovered as the lawyer for the Dink family.

Among the numerous awards and recognitions bestowed upon Cetin is Continued on page 21
being named an honorary member of the Armenian Lawyers Association of France.

Cetin’s presentation was followed by an insightful question-and-answer period. During this session, she spoke of her first meeting with Hrant Dink, their mutual struggle for justice and truth about the Armenian Genocide, the challenges and threats each received and, ultimately, Dink’s assassination.

Cetin moved the audience with her dedication and loyalty to her good friend and to the human rights struggle. She explained how the system and authorities had failed Dink by not affording him the protection despite widespread knowledge of what was being plotted. She noted in this regard, “While other prominent civil rights advocates such as Orhan Pamuk, whose lives were threatened, got the protection, Dink was not afforded the same. This was solely due to the fact that he was Armenian.”

Nevertheless, she remains optimistic that the ultimate price paid by Dink caused a marked change in Turkey, as evidenced by the thousands of Turks who marched at his funeral, and by the fact that the ensuing judicial process has not ceased. Cetin believes that these are signs of a certain level of acknowledgement and readiness to face historic wrongs.

At the conclusion of her remarks, Cetin encouraged everyone to join her for the commemorative events that will take place in Istanbul and other parts of Turkey on April 24, 2015.

Cetin bravely remarked that she will never stop advocating for human and national rights, truth and justice, regardless of the consequences. The spirit and drive of Hrant Dink persist.

Edvin Minassian is a partner at Tennenhouse, Minassian & Adham Law Offices, where he practices workers’ compensation law. He is a graduate of Loyola Law School. Edvin serves the Armenian Bar as Co-Vice Chair, and was Chairman from 2010-2012. He is the Chairman of the Organization of Istanbul Armenians, member of the Ararat Home Board of Trustees and a frequent contributor in Turkish to Hrant Dink’s newspaper, Agos.
FRESNO BLOOMS IN AUTUMN FOR CALIFORNIA SUPREME COURT JUSTICE MARVIN BAXTER

It was an event like no other because it was about a man like few others. Not far from the Fowler farm of his boyhood and just a tractor-pull away from the 100-year old red-brick Holy Trinity church across the street, a star-spangled banner of judicial luminaries was unfurled in Fresno’s Old Armenian Town, breathing renewed life and memory in a place where it all began so long ago for so many. But rather than merely marking the beginning of a historic community, nearly 800 friends and family of Justice Marvin R. Baxter gathered in the heart of Saroyanland at the Fresno Hotel and Conference Center to witness the culmination of a career of impeccable public service and to pay tribute to a refined and gentle presence of historic quality.

With the entire Supreme Court sitting en banc at lavish dinner tables, joined by hundreds of the state’s appellate justices and superior court judges, a bona fide Who’s Who of California’s golden judicial harvest offered rich and rewarding reflections about a quiet man who spoke loudly with his resounding integrity.

The Editors thank Juan F. Ramirez for contributing the photographs.

Governor George Deukmejian, Justice Armand Arabian and Armen K. Hovannisian

Guest of Honor California Supreme Court Associate Justice Marvin Baxter is joined by Governor George Deukmejian, Justice Armand Arabian (retired), Supreme Court Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye, Associate Justice Charles Poochigian, and members of the Armenian Bar Association to celebrate the career and public service of Justice Baxter at a gala dinner banquet in his honor

Armenian Bar members Raymond Aghaian, Garo B. Ghazarian, Armen K. Hovannisian, Nigol Manoukian and Lucy Varpetian with Justice Marvin Baxter

California Chief Justice Tani Cantil-Sakauye flanked by Sara Bedirian, Jacklin Boyadjian, Armen K. Hovannisian, Garo B. Ghazarian and Nigol Manoukian
The teams generally do not know the identities of their opposition, and will not know how they rated against the competition until they are ready to advance to the next round.

The first day of the trial advocacy competition took place on November 3, 2014. The Mesrobian team represented the defense in a felony grand theft case and, ultimately, they successfully established reasonable doubt as to the defendant’s guilt, leading ultimately to his exoneration. November 10, 2014 saw the convening of round two. With one session already under their belt, the students felt more confident and better prepared, but this time they assumed the role of the prosecution, and proving the case beyond a reasonable doubt loomed as a greater challenge.

There are certain key take-aways which will become always-stays for this group of young legal eagles. They started as individuals, separate and apart, and ended up as a single, organized, and unified unit working for a common goal. Sacrifice was their unanimous gift to their school, to their families and to their futures as these 9th-12th graders worked tirelessly after school and on Saturdays to make a positive difference in their lives.

One example of that educational affluence came when team member Abraham’s mother reflected that she had seen a difference in the way that her son had been recently expressing himself. She described how the boy would articulate nicely and concisely, making his points with logic and supporting facts. Abraham’s father, on the other hand, sensing the emergence of his son’s sharp and silver tongue, thought that Abraham was becoming a smart aleck and insisted that he stop his outspoken behavior. Mother was quick to correct Father’s misapprehension about their son’s sudden loquaciousness, reminding her husband, “Don’t you see, old man, what he’s doing? He’s preparing for the mock trial.” Turning to her son, she smiled and said, “Abres dghas.”

The Editors thank Ani Cinquegrani for contributing the photographs.

VANNA KITSINIAN SPEAKS IN SUPPORT OF GENOCIDE REMEMBRANCE RESOLUTION FOR COMMUNITY COLLEGES

On August 20, 2014, Armenian Bar Association Board Member Vanna Kitsinian, Esq. attended a special meeting of the Los Angeles Community Colleges District (LACCD) Board of Trustees to provide testimony in support of a resolution designating the month of April 2015 as “Los Angeles Community College District Month of Commemoration of the 100th Anniversary of the Armenian Genocide of 1915.”

The resolution incorporates Armenian Genocide education and awareness as part of the district’s teaching curriculum and campus activities, and calls on the United States President to work toward equitable, constructive and sustainable Armenian-Turkish relations.

In her address to the Board of Trustees, Ms. Kitsinian spoke of America’s first congressionally-sanctioned non-governmental organization, Near East Relief (NER), which was formed as a direct result of the Armenian Genocide in 1915. She emphasized the imperative to teach college students about this significant period of their country’s own history which spanned 15 consecutive years (1915-1930) and was supported by three consecutive political administrations, including Woodrow Wilson, Warren Harding, and Calvin Coolidge. Ms. Kitsinian is the co-chair of “America We Thank You: An Armenian Tribute to Near East Relief,” an ANCA-WR initiative which aims to honor the organization 100 years after its formation for the instrumental role it played in saving the Armenian Genocide refugees that were fortunate to have survived.

Kitsinian concluded, “The adoption of this resolution one year before the Armenian Genocide Centennial is a significant victory for the Armenian-American community in general, as well as all community college students throughout Los Angeles. Omitting this part of history from a student’s education and curriculum would have been to deny young minds the truth and a deprive them of a fuller understanding of America’s historic quest for justice.”

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The teams generally do not know the identities of their opposition, and will not know how they rated against the competition until they are ready to advance to the next round.

The first day of the trial advocacy competition took place on November 3, 2014. The Mesrobian team represented the defense in a felony grand theft case and, ultimately, they successfully established reasonable doubt as to the defendant’s guilt, leading ultimately to his exoneration. November 10, 2014 saw the convening of round two. With one session already under their belt, the students felt more confident and better prepared, but this time they assumed the role of the prosecution, and proving the case beyond a reasonable doubt loomed as a greater challenge.

There are certain key take-aways which will become always-stays for this group of young legal eagles. They started as individuals, separate and apart, and ended up as a single, organized, and unified unit working for a common goal. Sacrifice was their unanimous gift to their school, to their families and to their futures as these 9th-12th graders worked tirelessly after school and on Saturdays to make a positive difference in their lives.

One example of that educational affluence came when team member Abraham’s mother reflected that she had seen a difference in the way that her son had been recently expressing himself. She described how the boy would articulate nicely and concisely, making his points with logic and supporting facts. Abraham’s father, on the other hand, sensing the emergence of his son’s sharp and silver tongue, thought that Abraham was becoming a smart aleck and insisted that he stop his outspoken behavior. Mother was quick to correct Father’s misapprehension about their son’s sudden loquaciousness, reminding her husband, “Don’t you see, old man, what he’s doing? He’s preparing for the mock trial.” Turning to her son, she smiled and said, “Abres dghas.”

The Editors thank Ani Cinquegrani for contributing the photographs.
Hrant Dink Honored by Members with Planting His Forest in Armenia

By Lucy Varpetian

We met Hrant Dink at the 2006 Midyear National Meeting in Philadelphia, PA. He was on a panel with Gregory Magarian, a Professor of Constitutional Law at Villanova University. The topic was “Free Speech and the Armenian Genocide.” Dink was the editor of the Armenian and Turkish language newspaper, “Agos,” and in 2005, he was convicted of violating Article 301 of Turkey’s penal code for commenting on the Armenian Genocide and allegedly “insulting the Turkish identity.” Dink’s travels took him to Los Angeles, where he met with a number of leading Armenian community organizations.

If you had the honor of meeting him, then you will quickly remember his very relaxed disposition and his soft-spoken manner. He smiled often. He was agreeable and kind. He won the hearts of everyone around him, not just with his vision, but with his passion and courage.

News of his assassination on January 19, 2007, was devastating. We gathered at the St. Leon Armenian Cathedral in Burbank, CA to console one another. A number of us, Annet Arakelian, Sara Bedirian, Nora Boghosian, Stella Chalian, Ani Darakjian, Arousiak Marairean, Zorina Ohanian, Karen Tatoveosian, and I had been fundraising for a forest planting in Armenia with the Armenia Tree Project (ATP). We contacted ATP and asked if they were agreeable to naming the forest in Hrant Dink’s memory. The sentiment was shared by many ATP donors, who had likewise contacted ATP. ATP announced that it would plant 53,000 trees – 1,000 trees for each of Hrant’s 53 years of life.

Finding appropriate planting locations is perhaps the most challenging part of ATP’s work. In addition to the proper irrigation and watering requirements, ATP must work with local political leaders in securing a commitment to maintain the forest and protect it from future loggers. Once a forest is planted, the next challenge is protecting it from cattle grazing.

The first part of the Hrant Dink Memorial Forest was planted in the Spring of 2007, at a special site near ATP’s nursery in Margahovit. The forest was created with the advice and supervision of Yale University’s School of Forestry and local foresters. It occupies 50 acres in Lori Marz. The rest of the trees were planted in 2008, when the site was officially inaugurated.

“As a result of the generosity of our donors, we have been able to recover this eroded area that will eventually turn into a beautiful green place commemorating the eternal memory of Hrant Dink. With this living monument, every single seedling that has been put in the soil with such love and care will symbolize the life and work of Hrant Dink,” noted ATP’s director at the time.

This Fall, I had the unique opportunity to visit the Hrant Dink Memorial Forest with ATP Founder and Armenian Bar Honorary Member Carolyn Mugar, ATP Board Member Anthony Barsamian and ATP staff members Jason Sohigian, Tom Garabedian, Lucineh Kassarjian and Navasard Dadyan. As we stood at the edge of the forest and looked at the ash, the birch, and the pine taking deep root in Armenia’s soil, I thought about the roots that Hrant
On the evening of August 27, 2014, a large audience of concerned community members gathered at the Armenian Youth Center in Glendale, California to attend a Town Hall meeting which focused on the plight of the Armenian community in Kessab, Syria. Co-sponsored by the Armenian Bar Association, the event featured as keynote speakers, Garo Ghazarian, Chairman Ex Officio of the Association and Stepan Apelian, a resident, business owner, and community leader of Kessab.

Kessab is a town located in the northwest corner of Syria, nestled in the mountains which rise above the Mediterranean Sea. The town’s inhabitants are nearly entirely made up of Armenians. Kessab is one of the few Armenian villages that survived the Armenian Genocide and was able to continue as a community. In March, 2014, the town was invaded by heavily armed militia who entered Syria from the Republic of Turkey. Engrained with the collective memory of the Genocide, most of the residents of Kessab fled to the neighboring city of Latakia, Syria. The insurgents inflicted violence upon the community and in the process looted and destroyed Armenian churches, schools, homes and businesses.

Mr. Ghazarian, who Co-Chairs the Armenian Genocide Centennial Committee, was the first speaker for the evening. He explained to the audience that hearing of the violence that was being wrought upon his ancestral home of Kessab, he decided to travel as close as possible to Kessab so as to get a first hand assessment of the situation and determine the immediate needs of the refugees. In an interview conducted by the Los Angeles Times Beirut Bureau Chief, Patrick McDonnell on April 9, 2014, Mr. Ghazarian explained his reasoning as follows: “The preservation of this village and its people is of utmost importance to the Armenian people.” Through the efforts of Mr. Ghazarian, refugees from Kessab who had reached Beirut were interviewed by Mr. McDonnell. He wrote of their harrowing stories and the Los Angeles Times brought their tragic situation to world attention by publishing the Kessab community’s plight in the first section of the newspaper.

Mr. Ghazarian further explained to the audience of Town Hall participants that he could not stay home in Los Angeles, while the residents of his family’s hometown were in peril. In an interview following the lecture, Mr. Ghazarian stated that I witnessed their emotional recounting of their and of all the Kessabtseys’ exodus from Kessab. We must insist that the International Community as well as Turkey’s own ally, the United States, stop paying lip service to Armenians, and to start an investigation of Turkey at all levels. We must demand more than mere utterances of “concern.” We must demand action to not only halt Turkey’s continued disregard for Armenians, but also the undertaking of sustainable efforts to remedy what will no doubt become an irreversible reality on the ground for our fellow Armenians of Kessab.”

With the aid of dozens of pictures, Mr. Apelian was able to convey to the audience a sense of the terror and destruction the Armenian community faced by the invading forces. He explained that several churches, schools and businesses were all but gutted of everything that was contained within them. Crosses were desecrated. Mr. Apelian spoke out that now Kessab poses an opportunity and challenge to the Armenian nation worldwide to see if the community can galvanize itself to come to the aide of its fellow Armenians and help rebuild its grand city.

Questions and answers followed the primary presentations.

Dink
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had set in our hearts in Philadelphia in 2006. I was reminded of his heroism and courage, and his embodiment of the national anthem of Armenia:

Ամիսից հարավ մկրտում է
Մահու է մահած հինգ ամսվա,
Բազմիկ է մտնում այս հարթությունում;

Death is the same everywhere,
A man dies but once,
Blessed is the one who is martyred
For the freedom of his nation.

For more information about the Hrant Dink Memorial Forest, or plantings in Armenia, contact Armenia Tree Project at info@armeniatree.org or 617-926-8733.
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Karen Mkrtchyan on Jul 11, 2014 at 10:10 AM

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Scarlet Avakian on Jul 6, 2014 at 3:04 PM
Message from the Editors:

The Newsletter was the great passion of Vicken I. Simonian. He was the author of many of the articles that were featured over the years. We hope to continue in Vicken’s tradition of writing informative articles for the Armenian Bar Association members and friends.

The Newsletter Committee extends its appreciation to Stepan Partamian for his significant and kind voluntary efforts in the preparation and production of the Armenian Bar Association Newsletter. For several years in our organization’s early history, Stepan helped distinguish our publications in the most favorable, positive and colorful of ways. We welcome Stepan back to our “newsroom” and thank him for bringing along his inimitable flair and standard professionalism.

The Newsletter’s masthead carries our names, but what you have seen here is the product of true teamwork with valuable contributions having been made by Robert Cannuscio and Garo K. Hovannisian.

Saro Kerkonian and Lucy Varpetian
The Armenian Bar Association is a non-profit, non-partisan organization, formed in 1989 to enable attorneys of Armenian heritage to better serve the law, the legal profession, and the Armenian community.

The Association provides pro bono services and legal education in Armenian communities across the country and sponsors programs to promote democracy and the rule of law in the Republic of Armenia.

Coming together socially and professionally, members from around the world have the opportunity to learn from one another as they join their different backgrounds and experiences in Association activities.

The Association is a democratic organization. It is supported and directed by its members, who approve its bylaws, elect its Board of Governors, nominate prominent jurists as honorary members, and set the Association’s annual goals and policies.

The Armenian Bar Association is committed to serving the profession of law, addressing the legal concerns of the Armenian community and fostering respect for human and civil rights.

Some of the Association’s operations include:

- Worldwide network of attorneys
- Continuing legal education seminars & workshops
- Pro bono program
- Rule of law projects in the Republic of Armenia
- Armenian Rights Watch
- Annual and mid-year national meetings
- The Newsletter
- Membership directory
- Amicus curiae submission on issues of interest
- Topical and regional practice groups
- Cooperation with other bar associations and lawyers’ societies

The Newsletter is published periodically by the Armenian Bar Association. Members and friends of the Association receive a subscription to the Newsletter as part of their membership. Opinions expressed in the Newsletter are those of the authors of the articles and/or the editors of the Newsletter and do not necessarily represent the views of the Armenian Bar Association.

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