

AYF Olympics Special Issue

SATURDAY, OCTOBER 13, 2012

Providence Answers Another AYF Olympic Call

By TOM VARTABEDIAN

BOSTON, Mass.—With the spirit of Mal Varadian hovering over a \$200 million stadium, Providence pulled out all the stops and answered their spiritual leader with a resounding victory in this 79th anniversary AYF Olympics.

In what was expected to be a three-team race, the suspense was there as all 3 battled it out to the very end before the “Varantians” prevailed with 176 points.

Host “Greater Boston” settled for second with 145 points after sweeping both pentathlons at the end to overtake Philly. The “Sebouhs” finished a credible third with 124 points.

After winning the crown last year in Chicago, defending-champion Detroit could do no better than fourth this time around, ending with a scant 49 points compared to 181 last year, as many of its top guns failed to show.

Fifth place went to New Jersey with 39 points, followed by the Hagopian-led Granite City team with 23, and Worcester with 20. The “Arams” took home the Most Improved Chapter Award after fielding a team of a dozen athletes for the first time in six years.

Toronto made a worthy appearance with 16 points, followed by Chicago, 12, Montreal, 5, and North Andover, 3. Also participating were Racine and Washington.

In all, 13 chapters took part in these games, represented by 200 athletes in what can be regarded as a noted success given the previous numbers.

The recent death of Mal Varadian might have been the motivating factor in this one. Losing a pillar of the community weeks before gave the “Varantians” just the right spirit to pull this out with the obvious numbers and talented athletes. They fielded a team of 40, dressed in black jerseys with the Varadian name prominently displayed.

His place at the usual pep rally that week was assumed by son Michael, who was a chip off dad’s block with words of encouragement. These “Varantians” were not to be denied.

Greater Boston showed up with 50 athletes and was expected to pose a threat. The “Nejdehs” did just that as the lead tethered throughout the afternoon. Philly wasn’t to be denied either, with



enough brawn in the lineup to make it interesting.

At one point early in the games, it was Philly (77), Providence (76), and Greater Boston (45), with most of those points coming in the pool. A later update had Providence over Philly, 109-105, with Boston lagging at 69.

But it was too little-too late for the “Nejdehs” to close the deficit, despite the flurry of points at the end.

For Providence, this marked the 39th championship in chapter history, dating back to 1934 when the games were officially launched. The only other chapter in double figures is Detroit with 14 titles. Meanwhile, the “Varantians” have racked up more than 7,300 points over their fabled history.

If comparisons are made, Providence last prevailed in 2009 at home in what was even a greater tussle with Philly, 252-232, with Boston at 46. The “Nejdehs” have truly surfaced as an AYF power with 100 Juniors waiting in the wings.

Wasn’t it just two years ago that Philly bounced back with a vengeance, scoring 296.5 points? And beat Providence by 175 points? It’s been that kind of an Olympic trade-off the past five years and destined to get better,

given the rise of stellar athletes in the various chapters.

New Jersey gained some solace by winning its third consecutive softball title rather handily. In fact, it was so lopsided that the mercy rule was exercised in all three games.

New newcomers to the pentathlon scene gave Greater Boston double the pleasure. Honors went to Nairi Krafian (2,080), who took over for her sister Araxi, and Vigen Sarkisov (2,560).

There were five high scorers with 15 points apiece. Three of them hailed from Providence: Greg Hamalian (800, 1,600, and 3,200); Stephen Tutunjian (long jump, triple jump, and high jump), and Lynne Tutunjian (25 free, 50 breast, and 25 butterfly).

They were joined by Granite City’s Michelle Hagopian (golf, discus, and baseball throw), who remained undefeated in her seventh year, and Philly’s Mike Kaisarian (50 butterfly, 50 freestyle, and 100 freestyle).

In what was a banner year for records, no fewer than six were broken. Sixteen-year-old newcomer Taleen Shahrighian from Detroit cracked the 800 (2:25.1) and 1,600 (5:17.5).

Tutunjian rewrote two of his own in the long jump (22’2 ¼”) and triple jump (48’4 ½”).

The others went to Hamalian in the 1,600 meters (4:33) and Philly’s Lindsey Santerian in the triple jump (33’1”).

Raffi Markarian of Detroit received the Ernest Nahigian Sportsmanship Award, while John Aharonian (Winchester) walked off with the Cory Tosoian Memorial Award for alumni golf. He shot a 78, besting a field of 40 players.

Rich Chebookjian and Ara Krafian were selected as co-Olympic Kings, while Astor Guzelian was recognized for his overwhelming community and church service by accepting the Varadian Spirit Award.

A word of gratitude to Mark Alashaian for keeping the announcements going throughout the day while keeping the stadium informed and updated.



**New Jersey Three-Peats
in Softball**
(page 10)

‘Thanks All’

A note from the AYF Olympics Steering Committee

WATERTOWN, Mass.—The 2012 AYF Olympics hosted by the Greater Boston “Nejdeh” Chapter was a huge success due to the dedication of a supportive community. The Steering Committee would like to thank many people that contributed to this year’s event. First, we would like to thank all of the local AYF alumni who helped man the ticket booths, concession stands, medical tents, welcoming desks, and stop watches. The Steering Committee also appreciates the hours of work from the committee chairs and members who worked closely with the Steering Committee to plan a packed weekend. We would also like to thank the management at our venue providers: the Westin Boston Waterfront Hotel, Newton North High School, President’s Golf Course, Armenian Cultural and Educational Center, and Camp Haiastan.

Olympics is about the athletics and we cannot thank enough all of the athletes who represented their chapters in this year’s games. It made for great competition all around. Congratulations to this year’s victors, the Providence “Varantians.” A special congratulations to our very Greater Boston “Nejdehs,” who placed second ahead of the Philadelphia “Sebouhs,” and finally, congratulations to softball tournament winners the New Jersey “Arsens.” We would like to thank all the AYF members and alumni from the other chapters and cities for visiting our fine city, especially Worcester, North Andover, New Jersey, Detroit, Granite City, Chicago, Toronto, Montreal, Laval, Racine, Washington, D.C., California, and even Armenia!

All of us should not forget to thank dear old Mother Nature for providing such great weather all weekend long. On Tuesday after Olympics, the weather in Boston was a full day of rain. We were certainly very lucky to have great weather for our Opening Ceremonies and appreciate author Chris Bohjalian who gave noteworthy opening remarks. We certainly cannot forget all the musicians that provided great entertainment all weekend long. From Onnik Dinkjian to Armen Gondrachyan (Amenchick), it was surely an energetic, entertaining, and unforgettable line-up that kept us all dancing until the early morning hours.

Lastly, we extend well wishes to the Washington, D.C. “Ani” Chapter as they prepare to host the 80th AYF Olympics next Labor Day weekend. See you all in D.C.!

2012 AYF Olympic Steering Committee:

John Aharonian
Tsoler Avedissian
Shant Badrikian
Michael Guzelian
Alan Jelalian
Tamar Kanarian
Nairi Khachatourian
Heather Krafian
Raffi Varjabedian

79th AYF Olympics Standings and Highlights

BOSTON, Mass. (A.W.)—The 79th annual AYF Olympics were held Aug. 30-Sept. 3 in Boston, attracting thousands of athletes, parents, AYF alumni, and friends.

Providence emerged victorious with 176 points, with Boston securing the number two spot (145 points), and Philly comfortably securing third place.

Below are the standings and highlights. The Armenian Weekly will publish a special insert dedicated to the games in early October.

Chapter Standings—79th Annual AYF Olympics

1. Providence – 176 points
2. Greater Boston – 145
3. Philadelphia – 124
4. Detroit – 49
5. New Jersey – 39
6. Granite City – 23
7. Worcester – 20
8. Toronto – 16
9. Chicago – 12
10. Montreal – 5
11. North Andover – 3
12. Racine – 0
13. Washington – 0

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Weekly Writer Ends 43 Years of Olympic Coverage



Armenian Weekly writer Tom Vartabedian with Olympic ‘King’ Rich Chebookjian, considered the best AYF athlete he ever covered.

By TOM VARTABEDIAN

Dear readers and AYF friends:

Being a man of letters, I feel the best way to break the news is being up front and personal.

After 43 years of reporting the AYF Olympics and turning out one special edition after another, it’s time to lay aside my pen and notepad.

The decision is not an easy one, given the fact that it was the very AYF and Weekly that launched my start three generations ago.

I couldn’t have picked a more opportune time to write my swan song after covering a Boston Olympics that was top shelf in every regard—the most successful and fulfilling I have ever experienced.

I remember back in 1969, standing next to editor Jimmy Tashjian at the games. I had my camera cocked and he had his pen going. It was the golden age of manual typewriters.

He says to me, “Tom, how would you like to contribute a couple stories as well?”

He handled the track and swimming. I was assigned the tennis and golf. Being a novice sportswriter for the Haverhill Gazette, I figured the experience would do me good. The next year, he handed over the other two sports, and thus began my long quest toward Olympic coverage.

Jimmy was the consummate journalist who revolutionized these games with his reporting skills.

Soon, there were so many stories and pictures, I had enough to fill 16 pages and more. It was like being a woodpecker in a redwood forest. There was no end to the possibilities.

The AYF Olympics was like my “naked city.” A city that never sleeps with a thousand stories ready to hatch. All you had to do was go out and find them. Most of them came to me.

In the decades that followed, I wound up missing three Olympics. I didn’t go out to California that one year. The birth of a son preempted another appearance. And last year’s recovery from open heart surgery was a good excuse to stay home.

Olympic guru Sonny Gavoor is a better man than I. He showed up

this year, following his cardiac procedure, and wouldn’t be denied.

I got to watch my two sons earn their medals and a daughter who found reporting a much better alternative than running a mile. In the end, it was the AYF and Hairenik Weekly that brought Sonya to her present job as city editor of the Newburyport News.

This was a good year for me. The debut of Taleen Shahrighian breaking two distance records left an indelible imprint. Watching the Krafian sisters (Araxi and Nairi) blitz their way to gold medals was another bonus.

I got to see six records broken and five different athletes combine for 15 gold medals. And an incredible athlete in Michelle Hagopian, who has not only been unbeaten in seven years, she’s taken on the role as executive director of the ANCA’s Eastern Region.

A Boston victory in my backyard would have been the icing on the cake but Providence kept the crown in New England and dedicated it to my old friend Mal Varadian. That was special, indeed.

Seeing Worcester bounce back after six years in absentia was encouraging, as were the four Sarajian brothers from New Jersey running their own relay race.

It isn’t every day or decade you get to cover the likes of a Rich Chebookjian. I first met him as a 17-year-old bound for Dartmouth. He was playing football for Waltham High that year and ran roughshod over my city of Haverhill. His dad Shant was my first AYF advisor for Somerville and cultivated my fraternal spirit.

From the same mold came Detroit stalwarts like Jill Tosoian Dolik and Nancy Gavoor who top the women’s list. I remember bugging them so much for stories, it got repetitive after awhile.

Now, I’m watching Nancy round the track in the alumni mile and Jill’s daughter playing a golden game of tennis.

The ability to see two super record-breaking athletes like the Tutunjians (Stephen and Lynne) doesn’t happen every era. For that, I’ve been blessed. I covered their mom the day she set the record in the 800 meters back in 1979.

There are no strangers at an

AYF Olympics, only friends waiting to meet. How many relationships have materialized over these 79 years? Too many to count, naturally. I idolize them all.

Nothing—and I mean nothing—pleases me more than watching the likes of Heather (Apigian) Krafian keeping law and order over this Olympics. Aside from tailgating her daughters, she worked diligently behind the scenes. Who can forget that just a few short years ago she was in a wheelchair from what appeared to be a debilitating illness?

Looking over the current list of record-breakers, both men and women, I’ve watched every one of them fall over time, including Charlie Ajootian’s shot-put mark my first year in 1969. The beat never really stuttered.

Folks, take all the gold medals and put them in a box for prosperity. In the long run, they won’t find you a job or sustain your life. They won’t cure your medical problems. You will soon learn that the best race of your life will be the human race. If the Olympics can give you that stride, with all the advantages, then you’ve won yourself the biggest prize of all.

The number of friends and acquaintances I’ve earned across the country cannot be measured. The litany of stories that evolved and multiplied from gifted athletes and unsung heroes have been my panacea. They’ve cured my ills and given me a chance to rejoice.

I couldn’t have done it without my wife Nancy and family behind me. They’ve been indispensable with support and enthusiasm. And, of course, the dozen or so Weekly editors, including Khatchig Mouradian, who were obliged to deal with all my copy, crude as it’s been at times. My gratitude to you all.

It doesn’t mean that I’ll be leaving my post as a correspondent behind. The stories and special features will always remain a part of my life. That will never change. And you just might catch me in the stands watching a race rather than reporting it. That I’ll leave to others. Hopefully, I’ve helped train a few good people along the way. The baton is in your hands now.

Thanks for the memories!
Your pal,
Tom Vartabedian

Opening Ceremonies Touches All Parameters

By TOM VARTABEDIAN

BOSTON, Mass.—Speeches and other formalities aside, the Opening Ceremonies proved a rather colorful and meaningful introduction to these 79th annual Olympic Games held at the new \$200 million Newton North High School.

Thirteen chapters and some 200 athletes marched along the track as close to 2,000 spectators showed their appreciation under sunny skies and comfortable temperatures.

One very distinct highlight was a cadre of youngsters releasing tri-colored balloons in observance of the 500th anniversary of the Armenian printing press.

“This has played a significant role in preserving and transmitting our language, faith, and culture,” said Greater Boston Chapter president Antranig Avedissian. “The 500th anniversary also coincides with UNESCO’s nomination of Yerevan as 2012 Armenian Book Capital. It’s a tribute to the power and reach we have through our literature.”

Avedissian further praised the AYF’s 79-year legacy in its role in preserving the Armenian nation and heritage.

A moment of silence was offered to three deceased icons of Olympic lore—Rosanne Chebookjian, Mal Varadian, and David Papazian—each of whom succumbed this past year.

Also introduced were co-Olympic Kings Rich Chebookjian and Ara Krafian, along with Varadian Spirit recipient Astor Guzelian. All three were honored at the Alumni Reunion on Friday night.

The appearance of best-selling author Chris Bohjalian was another ideal touch, especially with his book *The Sandcastle Girls*, which has taken the literary front by storm. (A separate story on Bohjalian is elsewhere in this edition.)

The melodic voice of Sevan Dulgarian was also warmly received. The 17-year-old Bedford High senior enthralled the gathering with her rendition of the national anthems, including all four verses of “Mer Hairenik.” The words “Sevan! Sevan!” reverberated throughout the stadium as applause rang out.

In his remarks, Archbishop Oshagan Choloyan touched upon the current turmoil in Syria, saying, “Our hearts are heavy with distress for our brothers and sisters in that battered land whose lives have been turned upside down.”

Always one to focus on the athletes, Srpażan added some words of wisdom. “To participate and contribute for the greater good is a noble achievement,” he brought out. “You must look beyond this small playing field to the greater arenas of the world. Contribute your unique abilities and skills for the collective good of humankind.”

Representing the AYF Central Executive was Raffi Hovagimian, who mentioned the Javahk Project in Armenia.

“AYF chapters across the re-

gion are educating their communities about Javahk in hopes of using the advantages awarded to us in America to help promote our fellow Armenians,” he said. “It’s a testament to what the AYF family can do when rallying behind a cause with the collection of food, clothing, school supplies, and other necessities.”

In representing the ARF Central Committee, Dikran Kaligian called upon the youth to get involved with other internal projects such as lobbying in Washington, serving as United Nations diplomats, and taking advantage of internships in Armenia.

“The opportunities to serve your heritage and culture are boundless,” he told the athletes. “Go back to your churches and communities with a fresh approach to service and commitment. Always stay involved.”

Ungerouhi Suzy Azarian, representing the ARS Eastern Region, took note of the recent surge at the last convention, when \$22,000 was raised for Syrian-Armenian schools. Other missions of goodwill throughout the world were carefully delineated.

“We’ve revamped our Summer Studies Program to a one-day seminar now called the Youth Connect Program,” she said.

Aram Kayserian brought greetings on behalf of the Homenetmen’s Eastern Region. “Elevate yourself and others around you,” he said. “A mixture of social, educational, and athletic programs makes our organizations uniquely similar. We will continue to maintain strong ties with the AYF in developing a bright future for all.”

The procession of athletes was like an eclectic road show. Providence came dressed in black as a memorial tribute to Mal Varadian. Washington featured its American Eagle mascot as next year’s host. The Canadians were well represented behind Montreal and Toronto. New Jersey did a kick dance and both Worcester

and Hartford emerged on the scene for the first time in many years.

Worcester unveiled a dozen athletes for the first time in seven

years, led by four Avakian sisters (Talin, Kohar, and twins Nairi and Garineh) and the Charchaflian siblings (Hovig and Knar). A tennis medal Friday put them on the

scoreboard.

Bostonians Araxi Krafian and Kevork Ourfalian carried the Olympic torch, signaling the official start of the games.



Armenchik Rocks Saturday Night Dance at Olympics

By MICHELLE HAGOPIAN

In case you missed Saturday night at the AYF Senior Olympics, Armenchik brought in 1,400 people to the Westin Boston Waterfront Hotel.

Armen Gondrachyan, known by his stage name Armenchik, is a sensation in Haiastan and has traveled the world performing his music. This year, the Boston Olympics Steering Committee decided to bring him in for a new and exciting experience for the weekend's guests.

The decision paid huge dividends for the AYF and the Boston community, especially when you consider that to include Armenchik cost a few extra bucks.

"We knew the financial responsibilities we had going into this Olympics and with Olympics in Boston and the population of Armenians in the area, we had the opportunity to bring in a 'new' artist that would draw all those people to our event. Saturday night of Olym-

pics is not as popular as Sunday, so we wanted to have a new sound to freshen things up a bit," said Steering Committee member Tamar Kanarian.

"We knew of Armenchik's popularity when our community center [ACEC] brought him for their first annual Kermesse in 2010. We saw the thousands of folks that came to see him so we thought about bringing him to the Olympics stage."

Saturday night's performance attracted guests that might not have otherwise attended the weekend. "Our attendance across the board was massive throughout the weekend. We were successful in introducing other Armenians to an AYF Olympic weekend that we have been able to produce for 79 years. Armenchik was great and we've heard nothing but great comments of his performance," Kanarian said.

The committee discussed bringing Armenchik for seven months, looking at all possible scenarios, and charting out attendance against expenses and possible ticket pricing. "You name it, we talked about it," said Kanarian.



She noted that sometimes it's difficult to take risks, especially when you have financial obligations to the AYF and the reputation of the weekend.

"Ultimately, we consulted with the Governing Body and CE [Central Executive]. We knew we had to

work hard to publicize the event and make sure everyone in the Greater Boston Armenian community was aware of this new addition to the weekend," she said.

People of all ages could be seen on the dance floor singing along to Armenchik's lyrics. The ballroom

was packed from the beginning of the night through the end.

Armenchik's performance will rest well in the minds of those who attended, and the AYF can look forward to a successful reward for the risk the Steering Committee took on its decision.

Hamalian and Hintlian Dominate Men's Track

By TOM VARTABEDIAN

BOSTON, Mass.—A major part of Providence's victory this year was its dominance of the men's track and field events. While they had a great deal of depth in the field events, their track efforts were handled almost exclusively by Greg Hamalian and Andrew Hintlian.

Hintlian was competing in his third Olympics following in the footsteps of his All-American father Fred who ran, jumped, and swam for the Boston AYF years ago. Andrew had swept the three distance events at the Philadelphia Olympics in 2010 but could not go to Chicago last year due to orientation activities at the University of Rhode Island (URI). While in high school, he had recorded personal bests of 1:58 in the 800 and 4:37 in the mile, as well as running cross country. He is currently a member of the URI track team specializing in the 800, but saw limited action during his freshman year due to some small nagging injuries.

Greg Hamalian is currently a junior at Holy Cross, where he is captain of the cross country team. Coming out of high school, Greg had a personal best of 4:42 in the mile, but he has made huge improvements while in college. This past season, he ran 2:02 in the 800 and 15:49 in the 5,000. But in the 1,500, he ran 4:00.28 at this year's Patriot League Championships to place 10th. It was at that meet where he met Providence coach Bob Tutunjian, who was there to watch his son Stephen compete for Lehigh. The two were introduced by John Hoogasian, who is the field events coach for Holy Cross. John competed in the AYF Olympics in the 1970's and has seen Bob regularly during the past



Providence ace Andrew Hintlian wins gthe 400 meters. (Tom Vartabedian photo)



Providence's Greg Hamalian breaks the 1,600-meter record. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

few years at Patriot League meets. Greg showed an immediate interest in joining with his younger brother Mark. Then they found that an old family friend from their church, Sarah Varadian, was the chapter president.

The "Varantians" expected to have several other entrants in the running events but lost most of them to injuries and conflicts with college schedules. So when the coaches were planning events, Andrew offered to move down to the long sprints to have better coverage over all the events. He did more speed work

during the summer with his father's coaching and hoped for the best on Labor Day weekend.

The first event on the track was the 3,200, and Greg ran a controlled race kicking the final lap to win in 10:47.7. Then came the 800, the only event where he and Andrew overlapped. The race was tightly contested with Armen Arakelian of Greater Boston battling both of them all the way. In the end, the finishing sprints by both "Varantians" won gold and silver with all three runners going under last year's winning time of 2:10. Andrew was feeling some tight-

ness in the quadriceps of his leg after that race. He stretched it out in time to win the 200 in 24.00 edging out the 100-meter champion, John Serian from New Jersey, who ran 24.12.

After that race Greg was getting ready for the 1,600 and asked his coaches if he could go after the AYF record of 4:36.4, assuring them that he would still have enough left for the 4x400 relay. Running by himself, Hamalian broke the 13-year-old record with a 4:32.80. The old record was held by Mike Baskin of New Jersey, who ran for the U.S. Military Academy, another Patriot

League team. After more extensive leg stretching, Hintlian came back for the 400 where he again battled Armen Arakelian wire-to-wire before winning in 54.40. After a brief rest, the duo teamed up with Gary Dodakian and Sevan Zobian to win the 4x400 relay. Hamalian once again used his strong finishing kick to come from behind and pass Philly and Greater Boston in the final 60 meters. After all was said and done, the duo had won every track event from 200 to 3,200 meters, and had been key members of the winning 4x400 relay.

The Athlete Chris Bohjalian Aspired to Become

By TOM VARTABEDIAN

BOSTON, Mass.—If there's any correlation between the 100-meter dash and having a book published, talk to Chris Bohjalian.

The best-selling author of 15 works, including *The Sandcastle Girls*, may just have the right formula for success.

Bohjalian played the AYF Olympic crowd to the hilt over Labor Day weekend, giving the athletes a message they didn't expect to hear, and an adult readership something that may have hit home.

Speaking before a couple thousand people in the stands and some 200 athletes gathered behind him on the field, Bohjalian reflected upon his schooldays and the athletic years that weren't meant to be.

Nostalgic and sentimental as it was, the message painted a pretty clear picture of the talented writer and his determination to capture an audience not necessarily athletes.

In the end, he may have been shamed into greatness.

"When I was 13 years old, my parents moved from a Connecticut suburb to Miami," he reflected. "I started school at Palm Springs Junior High and the first thing we did at gym was take a physical fitness test. Every boy had to take it."

"The best athletes were awarded gold shirts, the train wrecks and nerds were given white," he added. "The school clearly wanted to make sure that the school lepers were easy to spot. Their motto was something along the lines of, We will shame you into greatness."

In the end, only two boys wore white—Bohjalian and another—and endured their fair share of ribbing and abuse. Bohjalian was clearly no athlete. As for the other boy, he had an excuse, having experienced open-heart surgery that spring with a massive scar running down his chest.

"Life is all about persistence," he told his listeners. "Slowly, through



Best-selling author Chris Bohjalian gives his remarks at the Opening Ceremonies during the 79th AYF Olympic Games. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

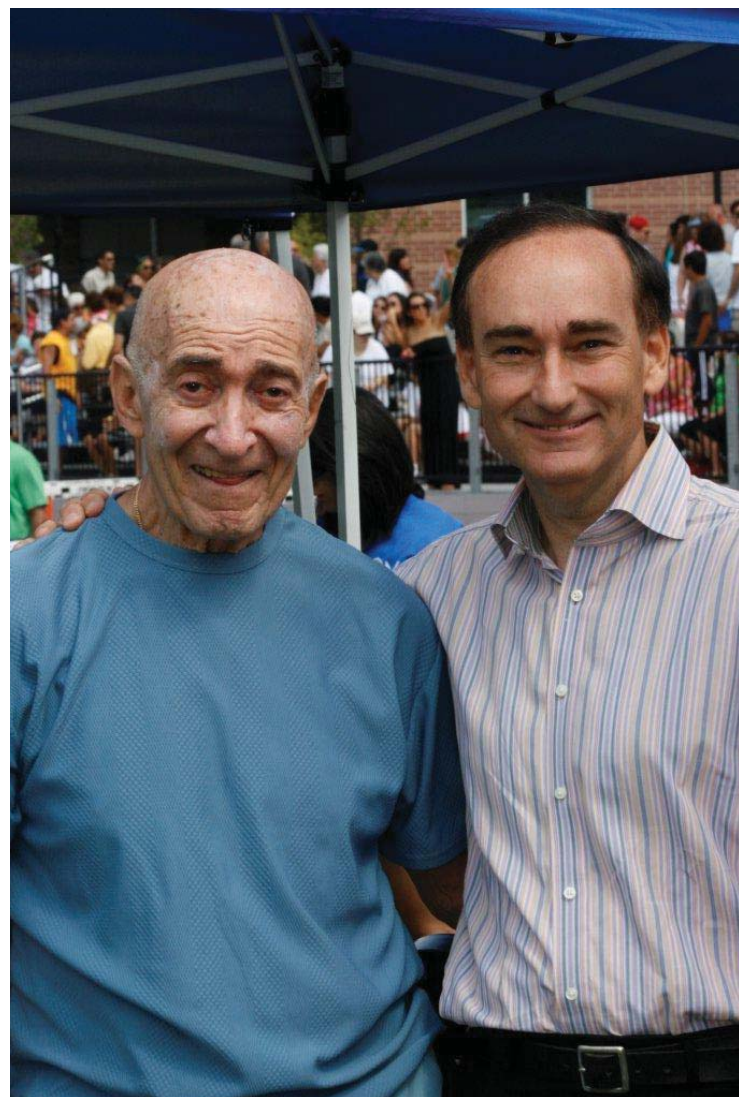
hard work and endurance, I was able to discard the white shirt for a more respectable color. What I lacked in talent, I made up in determination. I am nothing if not stubborn, as an athlete and as a writer."

Bohjalian amassed 250 rejection slips before he sold a single word. Four of his books have reached the New York Times Best-Sellers List, while three have been made into

television movies. *The Sandcastle Girls*, he admits, is the most important book he'll ever write.

It's an epic love story that surrounds the Armenian Genocide, and it's taken the reading community by storm.

An autograph session at Sunday's Olympic Ball attracted a number of buyers. People were seen throughout the lobby carrying the



AYF Olympic Patriarch Aram 'Sonny' Gavor shares a moment with author Chris Bohjalian. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

book or reading it quietly in a remote spot.

Ordinary table conversation posed the subject: "So, have you read Bohjalian's book?" And a full-scaled critique would follow.

The whole matter remains quite flattering with the author. He appears to handle the spotlight with a great deal of poise. A national tour that crossed

the country, though tiring at times, brought added exposure, along with an overseas junket that was memorable.

"Like so much else in my life and what we do in this world, it's all about persistence," he says. "Falling down, getting up, and trying again. Which is what this remarkable Olympic weekend is all about. Live the moment and love the experience."

Astor Guzelian Given AYF Spirit Award

By TOM VARTABEDIAN

BOSTON, Mass.—Spirit may be the name of a determined horse in a Disney movie, but it's also an award presented by the Varadian family of Providence each year to a distinguished member of the AYF Olympic community.

This year's winner was Astor Guzelian, a man who oozes with spirit at every turn. In the bigger picture, though, nothing brings the man greater pride—and spirit—than his family for maintaining those very same convictions.

Son Michael co-chaired the Olympic Steering Committee with Tamar Kanarian, making it one of the most profitable and successful ventures in AYF history.

Eric and Gail are two other children who carved their own niche in the community, not to

mention wife Lucy and a host of other relatives. Putting it succinctly, the Guzelian clan is a work in progress when it comes to deed and accomplishment.

"If I could dedicate this award to anyone, it would be to my parents Mihran and Makrouhi," Guzelian brought out. "My father was the godfather of the church [St. Stephen's] and my mother was the first chairwoman of the Ladies' Guild. They were good examples to follow for my three children and seven grandchildren."

First over to congratulate the recipient was Butch Varadian, son of Mal Varadian who just passed away. The moment proved an emotional one.

"I feel bad that Mal wasn't around to see me win the award," added Guzelian. "I talked to him just before he died. He's the one who truly personified spirit."

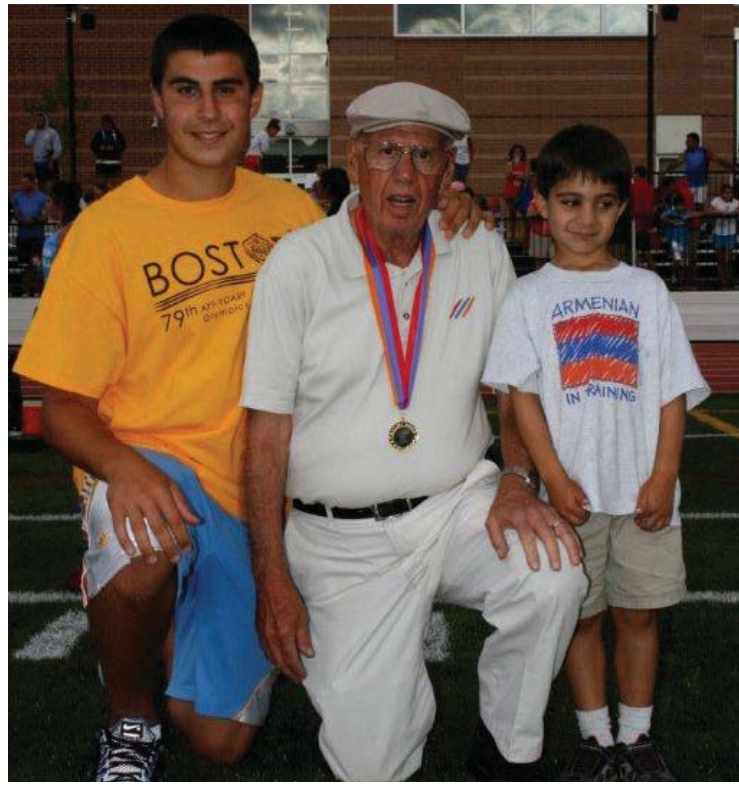
The son of genocide survivors, Guzelian was raised in

the Boston area. He joined the Cambridge "Ararat" AYF and later transferred to the Boston Chapter where he met Lucy and a coterie of lifelong companions.

Guzelian helped with the construction of Camp Haiastan and has served at St. Stephen's Church as a trustee, is an NRA delegate, and a men's club aficionado. Notably, he is a founding member of the Armenian Cultural and Education Center (ACEC) in Watertown, which has served as a mecca for social and educational venues.

Additionally, he worked to establish the St. Stephen's Elementary School, coached the Junior and Senior Watertown "Gaidzag" AYFers, is a fixture at Bingo, and has remained a wealth of knowledge throughout.

"People like him carry that perpetual spirit that is admired by all," said Kanarian, who made the presentation. "He's been a role model for many of us."



Astor Guzelian and his grand-children

Olympics Memories

By MARK GAVOOR

In August, I wrote an article in the Weekly asking for people to send me their Olympics memories—of their first or most memorable time—for this article. I got a few responses before the games, and went to Boston with the aim of collecting more from as many people as I could.

When I asked people, they either responded immediately or pondered the question for a while. It was the perfect Olympics to take on this mission. It was in Boston, which has always been the hub of all things AYF in my humble opinion, and it was, as I noted in another article, a real “old school” Olympics.

The first person to respond was my cousin David Gavoor. He posted it on the Armenian Weekly website: “My first memory of being at an actual Olympics is in ’67 or ’68 in Washington. I was six or seven at the time. My father was being named the Olympic King that year and he took his son to witness the occasion. (I believe we stayed with Uncle Rouben and Aunt Rose Marie.) My favorite memory is of the ’78 games in New Jersey when Nancy (your sister and my cousin) and I each won the pentathlon (both setting records, I believe). I was 17 at the time. All the rest is a haze of nothing but fond memories, hanging with family and reconnecting with old friends.”

Another e-mail response was from Harry Kushigian of Providence: “One of my most cherished Olympics memories has to be the 1957 Niagara Falls Olympics. A group of us Providence chapter members arrived there on Thursday to be early. Well, it turns out that a group of the Philadelphia guys decided to do the same, so we AYFers got to know each other. From that day and forward, some of my closest AYF friends are from Philly, especially my dear deceased buddy/brother Jack Hagop Papazian, who is greatly missed.”

Anne Atanosian of Washington wrote a lovely memory: “First, your wonderful great uncle Rouben Gavoor got our few youngsters back in 1943 to start an AYF chapter in D.C. I had just begun high school and was truly excited. We were about nine kids and made our Washington ‘Ani’ Chapter very popular as we grew in numbers and activities. In 1947 many of us went to New York City to attend the New York ‘Hyortiks’ Olympics. I met the man I later married, Harry Atanossian, from the Providence ‘Varantian’ AYF Chapter. He was a navy veteran from World War II. Providence at that time had the most incredible athletes: Johnny Arzoomanian, the Varadian brothers, Varad, Haig, Mal, and John, as well as Sonny Surabian, Doc Bedrosian, and Sarkis Atamian. Harry and I moved to Washington, D.C. after our wedding. As life went on I became a writer for the Hairnik Weekly and the Armenian Reporter, for over 40 years cover-

ing important Armenian affairs and people and the events that occurred. The AYF was and continues to be the dearest of memories. Buddy Gavoor was always a special AYFer and friend.”

I had forgotten that my great uncle Rouben had started the Washington “Ani” Chapter. That will make attending the Olympics there next year even more special.

I had a chance to catch up with an old friend from New Jersey. He told me that he would e-mail me his favorite Olympic memories. He dutifully did so, but asked that I not mention his name. He loved this particular Olympics for two reasons: “Reason #1: Harry Derderian, Olympic King and tennis champ extraordinaire. Harry was at the games with his wife Margo and two-thirds of their clan. Harry was hanging out with his buddy, and fellow Olympic King, Armen Harootian. His daughter Kara and her husband Alec Sarafian were there with their beautiful newborn daughter Ani. His other daughter Krista and son-in-law Dave Sharigian were also in attendance with their children. Alec and Dave were both great competitors for Detroit. Harry’s son Armen and wife Taline stayed behind in Detroit with their newborn Sevana. Harry was just having fun with Armen and being a good grandpa tending to Ani while watching his other granddaughter Taline set a new record in the 1,500 meter run. Later at the Ball, when Taline got a trophy for setting this impressive record, Harry sat there beaming happier than for any event he ever won.”

“Reason #2: The Hagopian Clan. Michael, Stephen, and Jeff and all their children, two sons-in-law, and especially Michael’s granddaughter Angele came together from Granite City, Detroit, Chicago, Philadelphia, and New Jersey, along with Audrey and Ralph Markarian (Karen’s sister) and Raffi, Ara, and Mel. They were all together with many of their friends in the lobby after the games having pizza and wings... just visiting and hanging out with each other. That’s what Olympics is all about.”

There is another story about the 1957 Niagara Falls Olympics. This one is from Ned Apigian, who was a charter member of that chapter. He told of how the chapter was started in 1956. In their first year, a small group of Niagara Falls AYFers went to the Olympics in Philadelphia at the Belleville Stratford Hotel. He recalled making great friends from Providence and “never meeting such a bunch of great folks in one shot.” They had a wonderful time. They were so full of the AYF spirit that they insisted on hosting the Olympics the next year—and they did! There was not a hotel big enough in the city to host the Olympics, but there were plenty of motels, as Niagara Falls was a famed honeymoon venue in those days. The only way they could handle booking all of the rooms was to pre-pay and book the rooms in several of these motels. AYFers around



the country had to call the committee, who then assigned them to rooms and collected their cash when they arrived. It was the only Olympics that Niagara Falls ever hosted. There is no longer even a chapter there. What a memory!

I also met a friend of my father’s, Dr. John Der Manuelian. My dad suggested I ask what his famous Olympic memory was. He had a great one. Dr. John was at the first ever AYF Olympics in 1934 in Brockton, Mass. That was pretty cool. I wish we had some film footage of that event.

Rich Berberian remembers the 1975 Olympics in Detroit. On Monday morning he climbed a street pole and took a sign that read, “AYF Blvd.” That sign hangs to this day in his basement. (I do believe this is safe to print as the statute of limitations has expired.) He also remembers the last of the great impromptu hook-ups at the Worcester Olympics in 1974. All the musicians stayed in one room and blew the roof off of the joint into the wee hours of the morning.

Joy Hoplamazian had a warm

memory. She remembers when Heather Apigian Karafian ran the Alumni Mile one year pushing a jogging stroller with one of her daughters in it. She also remembers Michael Hagopian telling about her son Vahan swimming in the Detroit relay team during the New Jersey Olympics in 1999. She is quite proud that Vahan won seven gold medals all from swimming relays. Vahan’s proudest Olympic moment was carrying the banner for the Washington “Anis” at the 2006 Olympics in Milwaukee.

Stepan Kanarian recalls the 1969 Providence Olympics at Brown University. John Asatrian, Providence, and Raffi Niziblian, New York, had an intense competition in the high jump. Quite a crowd assembled to watch these two stalwarts duel it out half inch by half inch.

Ara Topouzian emailed with the following reflection: “I have many AYF Olympic stories that will always be in my heart for the rest of my life. I grew up through the AYF and thus the Olympics were very much a part of my life.

My parents, Armen (Utica) and Norma (Detroit) Topouzian, met at the 1948 Olympics in Syracuse. My father said it wasn’t until a few years later, when the Olympics were in Detroit (and he won several trophies), that my parents got to know each other. I also think the Syracuse Olympics was one of the first times that your father, Sonny, and my Uncle Haigas (Ike) met and became lifelong friends.”

“Both my parents were athletes and they instilled in their children the importance of the organization and participating in the Olympic Games. My actual participation was not memorable; I did participate and scratching from an event was not allowed. My first Olympics that I was told I attended were 1976 in Montreal, Canada. I have difficult remembering what I did yesterday, so I will have to take my parents’ word that I was there. For the next 15 years or so, I never missed an Olympic weekend. I was part of three Detroit Olympic planning committees. It was the 1979 New

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A Balancing Act for Michelle Hagopian

By TOM VARTABEDIAN

BOSTON, Mass.—It's one thing to win a triple gold at the AYF Olympics, set records from time to time, and write an article of two for the Weekly's special edition; and another to take on a new job as Eastern Region director of the Armenian National Committee of America (ANCA).

But Granite City's Michelle Hagopian seems to be handling her multi-faceted life quite nicely these days. And she wouldn't have it any other way.

Once again, she tripled in the discus, golf, and baseball throw, shunning any competition that may have come her way.

Even with a 52 on the links, which proved a bad round, she still managed her seventh consecutive title. The medal wasn't important to her.

The fact she was able to play with her cousin Ani Hagopian (Detroit) proved of greater consequence, not to exclude her best friend Anya Battagliano (Boston). You'd never know they were competitors, judging by the friendly banter exchanged by the trio.

It was a far cry from last year's record-buster 41 she recorded in Chicago.

All she had to say about golf was pretty succinct: "A very challenging course with fast pin placements in tough spots. Lots of sand and water."

On the men's side, top honors went to Philadelphia's Pete Tashji-

an with a respectable 80 round, followed by Ace Ensign of Providence with 84, and Mark Sante-rian of Philly with 87.

Low gross for the alumni tournament went to Boston's John Aharonian with 78, followed by the Kanarians (Rich and Stepan) with 86 apiece, then Eric Guzelian with 88.

A field of 40 alumni and 10 AYFers teed off at the challenging President's Golf Course in Quincy. Two other prizes stood out: longest drive (Serge Minasian of New Jersey) and closest to the pin (Michael Guzelian of Boston).

Aharonian received the Cory Tosoian Memorial Trophy by Cory's son John, a Detroit alumni. Both he and sister Jill Dolik have decided to make an annual donation to the AYF Central Executive for trophy expenses.

Cory was an avid golfer and was instrumental in answering all questions from a Governing Body standpoint when it came to AYF Olympics golf. And nobody was closer to him than Nick Stepanian, who ensured that Cory's memory be properly recognized.

For Michelle Hagopian, her life these days is like a woodpecker in the redwood forest. She arrived in Watertown from Granite City with her dad Jeff and spent the next three days getting an apartment ready before checking into the hotel. Her mom Lynne and sister Megan also joined the effort.

An Olympics was the perfect place to make her splash after word got out about the ANCA



Granite City's Michelle Hagopian (center) takes her usual place on the medal stand with yet another gold medal in the discus, joined by Providence's Anahid Sarkisian, left, third, and New Jersey's Ani Sarajian, second. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

position.

"It was the perfect ice-breaker," she beamed. "Boston is one of my favorite cities with lots of friends and people I consider family."

Like her predecessor Karine (Birazian) Shnorhokian, another prodigious athlete in the pentathlon, she's putting a journalism career on hold to serve her heritage. Karine held the post for three years before returning to a nursing career and finishing as the fourth leading women's scorer of all time with 122 points.

Michelle is slowly creeping up on her with 105 points and still a few years left of eligibility. She and Lynne Tutunjian (Providence) happen to be five points apart in the active women's leaders list.

"Camp Haiastan and Olympics made me a well-rounded person," she confessed. "It all translates out to being the best person I can be."

Graduating from one of the top journalism schools in the country (Missouri) will only enhance Michelle's objectives in the

ANCA. She plans to continue writing some columns for the Armenian Weekly; the experience will come in handy for press releases and editing. Her office is inside the Hairenik Building across from her apartment in Watertown.

"Karine was one of the first I called about the job and she was very influential," said Hagopian. "When I used to come to camp and visit the Hairenik, I'd think this would be a cool place to work some day. And here I am."

Olympics...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

York Olympics I first recall, when my fairly new friend Alec Sarafian and I would run around Cosmo Stadium causing havoc and mayhem. Those were the days our parents didn't worry about us as long as we checked in periodically. Olympic Balls in my teenage years were considered a sacred event. We rented tuxedos each year. I can't picture anyone doing that now!"

"I have met some of my lifelong friends through the AYF and Olympic weekends. We almost always drove with the entire family and it was always the last hurrah before the dreaded school year began again. The memories I have are numerous, probably mostly only memorable to me. However, these are memories I still cherish and hope my children will be able to create their own in the near future."

John Arzigian was a member of the Merrimack Valley "Armen Garo" Chapter. He remembers the Montreal Olympics in 1970. He was only 20 years old and remembers driving 5 15- and 16-year-old girls up and back. As he had the trust of their parents, he spent the weekend watching over and tending to the young ladies. Parents who were crazy protective of their daughters let them

go with John simply because it was an AYF event...and John, of course, is such a good guy.

Olympic Queen and women's high scorer Nancy Gavoor's earliest Olympic memories was going to the track practices in 1961 at Mumford High School in Detroit (think "Beverly Hills Cop" and Eddie Murphy). She remembers watching Diana Aranosian Shoushanian, Detroit's top runner, and being impressed. She told Diana, "Someday I want to be like you." Nancy's fondest memory as a participant was in 1978, when she won the women's pentathlon and her cousin David won the men's. It was more special to do it in front of their Dad's and their mother, Grandma Gavoor.

Harry Derderian actually, independently, confirmed the above story from our anonymous contributor. He said almost the same thing. He loved being an athlete. He was honored to be named an Olympic King. But, really, his greatest moments were watching his children compete and earn points for their chapter. The 1994 Games in Providence stands out. His son Armen got a second in the pentathlon and anchored the last relay of the day that finally gave Detroit the victory over home-town Providence. Seeing his children and now, grandchildren, participate is most special.

Dottie Bengoian remembers being a teenager attending her

first Olympics in Providence. She recalls seeing a handsome fellow in white track shorts that seemed to be everyone's friend. They met again in 1989 at the Boston Olympics, fell in love, and were married.

I wonder how many couples met through the AYF and specifically at the Olympics?

Mary Garabedian of Bethesda, Md., also recalls the 1961 Detroit Olympics. It is where she met her husband Garo. They only lived 50 miles apart but went all the way to Detroit to meet...at an Olympics.

Ken Sarajian, New Jersey, remembers "when guys used to bring dumbbells, ovals, and clarinets and have impromptu hook-ups in rooms and hallways, which was more fun than the paid things they have today."

Leo Vartanian and Leo Derderian fondly remembered stories about each other. Leo remembers the first year of Olympic swimming at the 1957 Niagara Falls games (that was one memorable Olympics!). The swimming took place in an outdoor pool and both Leos were on the Springfield relay team. Springfield was in the lead when Vartanian took the third leg. He did not use a swim racing dive; it was more like he was diving for sponges, that is to say he went straight down. As a result, Springfield was not in the lead when Derderian took to the water as the anchor. "He

took off like a motor boat and we won the relay," Vartanian says. Leo Derderian laughs to this day when he recalls Leo Vartanian's dive. As Derderian was a few years younger than Vartanian, he remembers watching Vartanian run, and how, when he crossed the line he fell from exhaustion and everyone ran up to him. Leo Derderian assumed that Leo Vartanian had won and was inspired by the elder Leo's feat to become a better athlete himself. Later he learned that Vartanian had not won at all and that everyone ran up to him out of concern more so than congratulations for winning.

Alec Sarafian, like his father-in-law Harry Derderian, considers the Detroit victory in Providence in 1994 as his fondest Olympic memory. He also points out that Detroit has never lost a tug of war because the Detroit mothers made the best pilaf. (Because Detroit never lost, they discontinued the event.)

Kevoork Kaprielian came to the Olympics from Montreal. He and his wife Nora met in the AYF. His first Olympics were the Providence games in 1969. He said it simply and correctly, "We have to get Canada back into these games."

Dave Papazian of Philadelphia remembers attending the Worcester Olympics in 1974 as a 10-year-old. He remembers his

uncle running around timing at the Saturday trials. That was the day he became hooked and wanted to be part of it, which he did, both as an athlete and later on the Governing Body. He still has the AYF glass beer mugs from that Olympics.

Dickran Haroian remembers enjoying watching Frank Nahigian, Watertown, and Tommy Tomassian, South Boston, run an epic mile against each other, during which Frank edged out Tommy at the finish line.

Judy Mardoian Gavoor recalls when her son Aram won medals in his first Olympics, and lovingly draped them on his grandfather Harold. When his sister, Armené, won her first medals, she did the same thing. The tradition continued with her nieces Melanie and Audrey. Judy also remembers her first Olympics dancing with... well...me!

Speaking of me? My parents met in the AYF. Judy and I met in the AYF. Some of my best friends are all from the AYF. I remember that when my son and daughter scored their first points in their first Olympics, they had more points than I ever got. I agree with Harry Derderian: It is something special watching one's children compete.

This was a good fun little project. Thanks to everyone who shared their stories and memories.

Tutunjians Turn Olympics into Family Affair



Stephen Tutunjian (center) displays his gold medal after breaking his own record in the triple jump. Joining him on the medal stand are: Mark Hamalian, left, bronze, and Mooshegh Beremian, silver, all Varantians. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

By TOM VARTABEDIAN

BOSTON, Mass.—Families have long symbolized the Olympic tradition, and this year is no exception. In the case of the Tutunjians, each of the four members shared a moment of glory at these Boston games.

Bob Tutunjian helped coach his Providence team to its 39th championship overall with a grueling victory over two other chapters that broke the century mark—neither of which was last year's winner. In doing so, the "Varantians" recaptured the supremacy they last earned in 2009 at home.

His wife Shooshan watched her 32-year-old record in the 800 meters be broken by a young Detroit gazelle named Taleen Shahrighian making her debut. And off the stands she came to congratulate the youngster and pose for photographs.

Shooshan had been the only parent to hold an AYF record at the same time as one of her children. And it was a moment each of them enjoyed—a passing of the torch given their generation gap.

Son Stephen wound up eclipsing his own marks in the long jump and triple jump, adding the third gold in his other specialty, the high jump. The output kept him a point ahead of Philly's Mike Kaiserian in the active scoring race (85-84).

Daughter Lynne kept it a perfect Olympics with three individual golds in the pool, winning the 25 free, 25 butterfly, and 50 breast against some mighty stiff competition. The performance

moved her past the century mark with 110 points—5 ahead of Granite City's Michelle Hagopian—as each made their bid to capture the scoring throne set at 144. Michelle has been undefeated all seven years.

And with that triple gold, Lynne passed her mom in career points, 110-105.5, giving her sole bragging rights at home.

"You always come into these games looking to do your very best," said Lynne, who's a true veteran at 25. "Being at the tail end of my AYF career, I didn't expect to win every race. I was hoping for one gold, not three. When I was younger and in better shape, it may have been easier for me."

Last year, she won a gold and two silver medals, but the majority has been triple golds throughout a career that's been nothing short of illustrious. At one time, she was running sprints. Now, it's all strokes.

Aside from her parents and brother, no one was a bigger fan than her late grandfather, Robert, who passed on two years ago. He seldom missed an outing.

One other twist bears revelation. During these past World Olympic Games in London, women's swimming was a showcase event and two medal winners were no strangers to Lynne.

She swam against Rebecca Soni as a child, obviously unaware that Becky would win two gold medals. Yes, Rebecca did beat Lynne in that race.

Lynne also swam with Samantha Arsenault on a winning 4x200 relay. Arsenault also came up golden in London.

"I enjoyed watching them



Providence dynamo Lynne Tutunjian, center, swam to three individual golds, including this one in the 50-yard breaststroke. Sharing the glory are Natalia Sadaniantz (Providence), left, bronze, and Faye Khatchadourian (Montreal), silver. (Tom Vartabedian photo)



Detroit's Taleen Shahrighian is congratulated by Shooshan (Kassabian) Tutunjian after breaking her record in the 800 meters that stood for 33 years.

compete against the world's best," noted the Bentley College grad. "Women's swimming has come a long way."

Her final bow could be next year in Washington, D.C., and the ripple effect is expected to continue. In the meantime, she'll continue living in Boston and working her job as an accountant with Price Waterhouse.

Brother Stephen was not to be outdone as he soared to record heights once again. It was quick, efficient, and rather subdued this time around, not like 2010 when he cracked Leo Derderian's 52-year-old mark in the long jump. The whole pit area erupted in cheers that year.

The jumping specialist just graduated from Lehigh University with a degree in materials engineering. He was captain of the men's track team and named Most Valuable Athlete his junior and senior years.

Stephen qualified for the NCAA Division 1 Champion-

ships twice in the triple jump where he holds the Lehigh record at 50'41/2".

He was twice-named the Field Athlete of the Meet at the Patriot League Championships where he set a personal record by soaring over 24 feet in the long jump last year.

Stephen was Patriot League champion three times and was All-League six times, while making the League Academic Honor Roll. He was also named to the All-East Team three times in the IC4C Championships.

During pre-graduation ceremonies, he received a Distin-

guished Achievement Award from Lehigh for his contributions to the school. Stephen will be attending Tufts University graduate school in its bio-engineering department.

"I like to compete in the Olympics for my family," he confirms. "It was more enjoyable this year since I didn't have to drive or fly back to Lehigh for classes."

As for the two records re-broken, he felt especially gratified at having his grandmother on hand as a spectator.

"She had never been able to see me jump before," he added.

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Detroit's Derderians: An Influx of Olympic Generations



Harry and Margo Derderian help personify the generations that have marked 79 years of AYF Olympic history. Here, they are with family members at the Olympic Games in Boston.

By TOM VARTABEDIAN

BOSTON, Mass.—It all began with Harry Derderian, a young tennis upstart in the 1960's bent on putting his Springfield-IQ AYF team on the scoreboard.

When his star-studded career finally ended, he had collected an unprecedented 10 consecutive titles. No doubt, Derderian helped elevate the tennis component of these Olympics, as people began taking notice and following the game with avid interest.

It came to a halt in 1971 right here in Boston. Derderian had moved to the area and had transferred to the "Siamantos." It was his finale as an athlete and he was facing a little-known 16-year-old surprise in John Saryan from Racine. Saryan overcame triple match point

against Derderian, defeated Boston's Alan Telian for the gold, and unveiled an impressive championship streak of his own.

If anything, Derderian launched a generational run that extended 50 years. He was named an Olympic King in 1980 and later became a catalyst for ANCA activity throughout the region.

"Growing up inside a small community like Indian Orchard was really super," said Derderian. "We did okay with four Olympic Kings. We've overcome some adversity in our lives but cherish these good times with our kids."

Next to crash the scene were the three children, led by son Armen, who plummeted his way to 74 points. He was part of seven winning Detroit teams, which retired the Olympic Cup in 1995 and 2002 (which he captained).

Armen was known for his ver-

satility, winning the pentathlon, dashes, and distances. A pulled hamstring in one Olympics and a Mediterranean disease in another kept him from achieving even greater heights.

In 2007, he entered the Eastern HMEM Olympics and emerged with three gold medals. He has officiated for 19 years in the Mid-West Junior Olympics as well as the Junior and Senior AYF, joined by colleagues Alex Sarafian and Mike Kazarian.

Sisters Kristen and Kara also made an impression during their outings. Kristen won medals for Junior and Senior distance running events, while Kara participated in the only tennis doubles tournament in Olympic history, earning a silver medal.

Also in the picture is Derderian's sons-in-law Alec Sarafian and David Shahrighian, both of whom were mammoth contributors to Detroit's success. Sarafian was a member of the University of Michigan track team, scored 90 points in the Olympics, served on Governing Body, and for many years coached the Juniors and Senior.

As for Shahrighian, he tallied 82 points, captured 3 pentathlon titles, and also coached many years.

Now, along come his children Taleen and Armen to carry the torch, with Aram and Tamar waiting in the wings. Taleen eclipsed two records the minute she stepped onto the track this year, giving notice of her capabilities. (A separate story on her is included elsewhere in this edition.)

A bout with cancer refuses to take its toll on Harry's wife Margo. If anything, her granddaughter's two records and a silver medal in her debut was an instant remedy. Another four-month-old granddaughter has also had corrective surgery over the summer.

"We have much to celebrate with regard to our family," said Derderian. "And it's only going to get better. The golden years will become even better when we watch the grandchildren reach the medal stand. The AYF Olympics is all about generations and we're proud to be associated with that."

Taleen Shahrighian's Records No Flake



Detroit's Taleen Shahrighian, left, is congratulated by previous record-holder Mary Najarian of Providence, whom she defeated in the 1,600 meters. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

By TOM VARTABEDIAN

BOSTON, Mass.—Taleen Shahrighian made her Senior Olympics debut an auspicious one as she broke two records in the 800 and 1,600 meters, added a silver in her 3rd event, and gave notice of a promising future in years to come.

All that from a 16-year-old who knew her times were golden even before the gun fired and she took a step. It was only a matter of which record would be eclipsed and by how much.

The 1,600 came first as she blew out the field after the second lap. Included in the carnage was Mary Najarian of Providence, the previous record-holder in 2009. Taleen's time of 5:17.5 was 7 seconds faster. Mary ran four years for the University of Rhode Island, graduating in 2011.

Taleen had just surpassed that time a month before in the Juniors, so it was déjà vu for the youngster.

Next up was the 800 meters and that went by the boards just as swiftly by 3 seconds with a time of 2:25. There to congratulate her was the previous setter Shooshan (Kassabian) Tutunjian, who set that standard 33 years ago in 1979.

Once again, if comparisons are in order, Taleen had that record engraved in Juniors.

"Nancy Gavoor brought her over to me for a photo and it was very special to see this," Taleen said. "Being with two very prominent AYF athletes will always be memorable. More than anything, I hope to accomplish what these two great women did over their careers."

Could Taleen become the greatest ever, given her supreme effort this Olympics? A bit premature to say at this time. She's had plenty of company throughout the AYF archives.

The last twin record in these events was recorded in 1976 by Robin Avedisian, also from Detroit, who ran a 2:34.4 in the 880 and 5:51.2 for the mile.

In 1978, Andrea Nranian, again a Detroiter, broke two dash records her first year as a much-touted 16-year-old. And she repeated that act again in 1979 in 2 other sprints in what appears to be the greatest back-to-back years ever. Andrea still has all 4 records in the 50, 100, 200, and 400, and is regarded as the best female sprinter ever.

Detroit's Caroline Arakelian broke two records in swimming during her debut a year ago. And let's not forget Stephen Tutunjian's two records in 2010 in the jumping events.

Another with 2 marks, though not together, is Granite City's Michelle Hagopian in golf (41) and discus (105'2"), as well as Lynne Tutunjian in the 25 free and 50 breaststroke, with times of 12.37 and 34.8.

Detroit's Nancy Gavoor was also a double record-buster in her debut, but those marks have since been surpassed.

Detroit's Raffi Karapetian has three records in the pool. Two were set in 1991 during the 50 free and 50 breast his initial year, adding the 100 free 7 years later.

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Kaiserian, Tutunjian Rule the Pool

By TOM VARTABEDIAN

BOSTON, Mass.—Age is no cause for recline, especially not when you're Mike Kaiserian and Lynne Tutunjian. They're like a good bottle of champagne. They ferment with the years.

The two paid little heed to their younger counterparts inside the pool and came away with three gold medals apiece.

Kaiserian, who belongs to an elite swim family, stroked his way to victories in the 50 fly, 50 free, and 100 free for Philly. The 15 points give him 84 in all, trailing only Stephen Tutunjian (Providence) by a single point in the overall active standings.

Tutunjian handled the women's side with gold medals in the 25 free, 50 breast, and 25 fly. She was pushed in spots by Worcester newcomer Maggy Babloutzian, but handled the surge. She now has 110 points atop the active scoring column.

Boston's Eric Movsesian had the home crowd cheering for his victory in the 50 back. Toronto's Garo Arslanian gave the Canadians some comfort by winning the 50 breast.

The Philly women were on top of matters, thanks to a double victory by Molly Mamourian in the 50 and 100 freestyles. The "Sebouhs" also took the 4x25 relay.

Kudos to Detroit's Meline Topouzian for capturing the 50 back rather handily.

The pool at Newton North was packed to the hilt in what proved an encouraging facet to these games.

New Jersey Three-Peats in Softball

By Tom Vartabedian

BOSTON, Mass.—Mercy! Will somebody please stop the bleeding. The New Jersey “Arsens” have turned the AYF softball tournament into a regular transfusion.

They “mercey-ed” all three opponents, meaning they won each of their 3 games by 15 runs or better to preserve a trend that started three years ago.

The “Arsens” have been totally in a class by themselves, thanks to a cadre of talent, an infield composed entirely of the four Sarajian

brothers, and the crisp coaching of veteran Mark Alashaian.

And to top things off, they trounced Providence in the finals, 19-4, in a game that was expected to be tight, judging by how the “Varantians” fared in previous games.

Of the 18 players New Jersey fielded this year in a co-ed venue, 12 were guys and six were gals. Prior to the championship game, the “Arsens” whipped both Philly and Detroit by 15 runs.

Against Providence, it was 5-0 after one inning and 10-1 after two. Action was stopped before the seventh inning ever resumed.

The Sarajians played a prominent role but had plenty of help. Ara went five for five, including a home run. Raffi was four for four, while Garo produced a run-scoring double and played stellar defense. Also credited with fine defensive play were Kyle Dinkjian and Adam Boyajian.

Dinkjian hit a walk-on RBI single in the sixth to seal the mercy rule. Haig Sarajian made his debut as a 16-year-old and contributed his share.

Alashaian has now coached all three championship teams, and

has brought a source of pride to this community.

“Our team is all about siblings,” remarked Ara Sarajian. “Each of us lives somewhere close and we come together for New Jersey softball. It doesn’t get much better than this. We’re good softball players who enjoy having fun. With Mark coaching us, we haven’t lost a game in three years.”

“The most rewarding part is that we grew up in Jersey and all the players are best friends,” Sarajian added. “We cling to our roots.”

Being the lone event on Saturday, many fans piled into Newton North High School for a day of frivolity and family hype. Plenty of good food and friendships were in vogue.

Special notice was paid to the Canadian team, comprised of a large contingent of Montreal and Toronto players. One guest was North Andover’s Mgo Kassabian, who stroked a pretty good ball.

For the record, New Jersey did share the title last year with the Canadians when rain cancelled the title game.



Track and Field from Tom Vartabedian’s Lens



Medalists in women’s javelin includes, from left, Araxiei Tossounian (Detroit), third; Lindsey Santerian (Philly), first, and Alyssa Reub (Providence), second. (Tom Vartabedian photo)



Providence won the men’s 4x400 meter relay. From left, Gary Dodakian, Andrew Hintlian, Greg Hamalian and Sevan Zobian. (Tom Vartabedian photo)



Medalists in the women’s triple jump are, from left, Theresa Jelalian (New Jersey), third; Lindsey Santerian (Philly), first, and Alyssa Soorikian (Philly), second. (Tom Vartabedian photo)



Greater Boston won the women’s 4x100 relay. From left, Christine Bahtiarian, Nairi Krafian, Maral Merian and Araxi Krafian. (Tom Vartabedian photo)



Women’s shotput medalists include, from left, Siran Krikorian (Providence), third; Ani Sarajian (New Jersey), first, and Nairi Avakian (Worcester), second. (Tom Vartabedian photo)



Start of a kiddie’s race. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

Bejian, Yeransian Net First Tennis Titles

By Tom Vartabedian

BOSTON, Mass.—Two 17-year-old tennis stalwarts quickly established their niche with convincing victories, giving notice of a couple dynasties in the making.

Matt Bejian gave Greater Boston some boasting rights by defeating his 16-year-old teammate Armen Festekjian, 6-1, 6-0, in a match that appeared more competitive than the final score indicated. A third place by Garin Habeshian made it a “Nejdeh” medal sweet.

Emma Yeransian of Providence stunned North Andover’s Olivia Barberian, 6-4, 6-1, after a nip-and-tuck battle the first set. For Barberian, that’s two silvers and a bronze over the past three years, giving North Andover its only points. Third place went to Philly’s Lindsey Santerian.

Men’s division

Bejian actually made his debut a year ago, coming into his realm straight from Juniors. He went up against a prodigious player in Providence’s Greg Maloomian and wasn’t expected to pull the upset.

In reality, he trailed the second set 1-5, came back to tie the score at 5-5, before falling, 7-5, in a tie-breaker. And Maloomian was a top-seeded player for Bentley College and had never lost in AYF play, much less given up a set.

“I never took tennis seriously until I was a teenager,” Bejian revealed. “Now, I can’t get it out of my system. Playing high school really helps.”

And what a career this has been at Needham High where he was 45-0 in doubles. Undefeated and pristine! He and his partner were so formidable, they led their school to two straight Division 1 state championships.

Bejian is ranked among the top 50 New England players in his age category and also carries a national rank. He’s expected to move into Number 1 singles this year for Needham. Academically, he’s an honors student and on his school’s Science Team.

“Right now, I have my sights set on giving my school another state title and playing tennis in college,” he says. “I have some goals that require a lot of hard work and commitment.”

Bejian has another goal in mind. He’s a project away from becoming an Eagle Scout and hopes to initiate a tree-planting venture soon in his community. He’s spent the last seven summers at Camp Haiastan so his friendships are many.

To reach the final round, Bejian ousted Hovig Charchaflian (Worcester), 8-2, and Jason Pjojian, 6-2, 6-1.

Armen Festekjian showed definite signs of brilliance against his teammate. He had won three previous matches that day while



Emma Yeransian (Providence) keeps her eye on the ball while bashing her way to a gold medal in tennis. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

upending Habeshian easily in the semis, 6-1, 6-0. An all-Boston final at this point appeared more significant than who got the gold. The “Nejdehs” registered nine big points to give themselves a nice cushion.

The 16-year-old Festekjian attends Dexter High in Brookline as a sophomore and plays tennis. He’s ranked fourth in New England for his age group. The fatigue of playing four matches was taking its toll in this final match, but Festekjian’s coming back next year in D.C.

“I’ve seen Armen play in tournaments and have followed his career,” said Bejian. “We hit a lot together. I knew what he was capable of doing as a player and had to be on my toes.”

Women’s division

Yeransian is also no neophyte when it comes to her sport. She plays Number 1 singles at Mansfield High and has been moving around the courts since she was four. Her AYF debut went better than expected against Barberian, a solid hitter from Salem, N.H., now attending University of New Hampshire.

“It was a good experience,” she said. “Seeing everyone come together like this is a rich experi-

ence. Olivia was good defensively. She had me worried.”

The champ uncorked a strong forehand and penetrated with her serves. The second set had matters pretty much intact.

She’s ranked in the top 30 of her class as a National Honor Society student, is a French National Honor student, and plays volleyball. Right after her match, back to school she rushed for volleyball practice. Working at a tennis club and taking lessons there certainly helps her game. She also teaches tennis to youngsters in the recreation department.

After high school, Yeransian hopes to attend Boston College as a marketing major.

In earlier matches, the champ toppled Philly’s Karine Keshgegian, 8-0, and Worcester’s Knar Charchaflian, 6-0, 6-0, while Barbarian conquered Providence’s Sara Hintlian, 8-2, and Philly’s Lindsey Santerian, 6-3, 6-2.

Charchaflian went on to play a consolation round. A fourth place put her chapter on the scoreboard for the first time in six years, giving notice of better days to come for the “Arams.”

A work commitment kept defending champion and top seed Stephanie Dolik of Detroit under wraps this year.

In all, 10 men and 11 women



Matt Bejian (Greater Boston) unleashes a backhand en route to his gold medal in tennis. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

took to the nets in what was considered a decent turnout by tournament director Rich Sarajian, who

was pretty impressed with the overall caliber of play from both sides.

Taleen...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 9

As the wheel turns, so will Taleen Shahrighian. After emerging as high scorer all six years in Juniors, she’s ready to rewrite the Senior books. She conquered the 50, 100, and 200 before switching gears to the 400, 800, and 1,600. She appears to be the “real deal.”

As long as she’s been running for Detroit, the Juniors have never lost. Finishing fourth this year after a conquest last year proves unacceptable in the Senior ranks. When they rebuild for 2014, look for the “K-T” kids to bounce back as Olympic hosts, especially with guys like Armen Derderian, Alex Sarafian, and Mike Kazarian behind them coaching and recruiting. And Taleen leading the assault.

“I’m disappointed I wasn’t a high scorer but I have my whole career in front of me,” she notes. “I’ll be around. My goal is to help Detroit win back the Cup.”

Taleen is a junior at Northville

High where she runs track and cross country, and is ranked third in the state. She’s been to state finals the last couple of years. Recently, she took 2nd place in a field of 250 girls at a Detroit Invitational, losing to someone who’s ranked 1st in the country and holds the national record.

She has the school record for cross country and 4x800 relay. Scholastically, she’s got a perfect 4.0 GPA, National and Spanish Honor Societies, and is involved in community projects. Taleen is looking into a physical fitness career and hopes to run in college when the time comes.

Olympic veterans may know her dad. David Shahrighian was a dynamic pentathlete for Detroit, best remembered for denying Rich Chebookjian the all-time scoring title his final year in 1984, finishing with 82 points. Now, he’s back with his daughter and son Armen, who’s a year older, with Aram, 13, and Tamar, 11, waiting in the wings.

The Shahrighians are about to make some more noise at these games.

Sarkisov, Krafian Rule Pentathlon

By TOM VARTABEDIAN

BOSTON, Mass.—It was an all Greater Boston finish in the pentathlon this year as Vigen Sarkisov and Nairi Krafian brought home their first titles with clear-cut conquests, scoring 2,560 and 2,080 points, respectively.

Each athlete prevailed in four of the five events and gave notice of what appears a long and illustrious skein to follow.

Sarkisov, a former Soviet citizen with three-quarters Armenian blood, captured the shot-put (38'9 3/4"), discus (98'1/2"), 200 meters (24.3), and long jump (19'11"). By the time he reached the 1,600, the matter was settled. All he had to do was finish—and he coasted. Two relay races were waiting his services. As it turned out, Greater Boston won both.

Krafian, a highly touted athlete, with sister Araxi took care of matters at her end for her Boston teammates. No way was this going to escape her grasp after the training and hard work she put in this summer. Araxi prevailed last year with 1,803 points. The sisters are coached by their dad, Ara, an Olympic King this year.

The 17-year-old Nairi captured the long jump (14'4"), high jump (4'4"), 200 (28.2), and 800 (3:03). The shot-put did her no favors at 21'7".

In all, three women vied for the title with the remaining two well off the mark at 1,220 and 1,144 points.

Sarkisov, meanwhile, was pushed by Detroit's Ara Markarian (2,268) and Philly's Aram Keshgegian (2,171). The men's ledger featured six competitors in all.

Despite their victories, the two champions were a distance away from the record. The women's standard is held by Allison Aylaian (Boston) with 3,256 points. Leo Kashian (Boston) holds the men's mark at 3,178 points.

Vigen Sarkisov

This 20-year-old first-time Olympian hails from a town in southern Russia called Rostov on Don. And he's proud of his Russian-Armenian roots, having immigrated here 17 years ago.

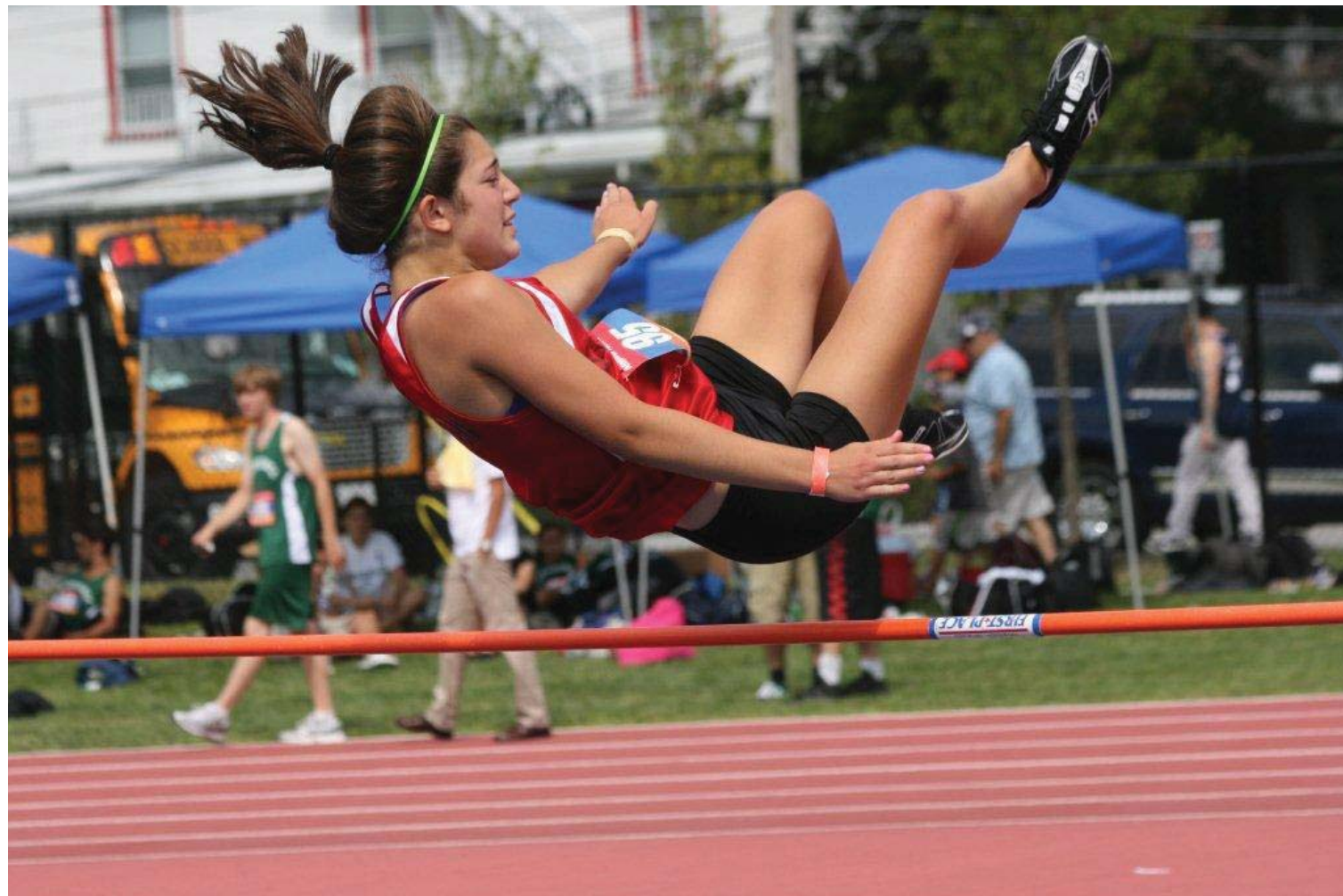
Both his parents were gymnasts while the 6-2", 205-pounder opted to play basketball and soccer. In reality, his best sport is track, as proven. He graduated from Belmont High in 2009 as a two-sport athlete and made the honor roll his junior and senior years.

He's now a senior at UMass Boston, majoring in psychology with a pre-med background. An aspiring career as a pediatrician awaits him. An internship at Boston Children's Hospital last year went very well.

The reason he nixed plans to compete in Chicago last year was a family commitment. His sister got married in Armenia and that's where he was. As for the pent, that, too, was haphazard.

"My chapter guided me into the event," he said. "Ara's trust and belief in me helped me succeed. We trained for a month together. He never pushed me and knew where to draw the line. He thought I could win it last year."

On hand to cheer him on were



Nairi Krafian clears the high jump en route to her first pentathlon victory. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

his parents, siblings, and other relatives. Vigen had a regular cheering section going in his corner.

"The Olympics proved to me that I can be a gold medalist with the right work ethic and coaching," he pointed out. "You can achieve anything if you put your mind to it and give your best. I hope to be around for the next six years."

Nairi Krafian

A year ago, sister Araxi took this event but decided to venture back to the individual events, particularly the dashes, where she excelled with golds in the 50 and 100. The pent title was kept in the Krafian family and it appears ingrained for years to come.

Two other sisters are waiting in transit, Anoush, 13, and Knar, 9, both gifted runners. The chances of them forming their own relay quartet was inevitable, even though Araxi turns 25 in 6 years. If all goes well, she'll have two years remaining.

"We'd love to be around to see that moment," rejoiced their grandparents, Ned and Araxi Apigian.

In the meantime, the older sisters will enjoy their moment of glory.

Nairi is a junior at Belmont High, runs track there, presides over the Armenian Club, plays soccer and basketball, and enjoys science and math. With little time on her hands, she'd like to join the Sayat Nova Dance Company.

"With three girls in the pent, it was nice knowing you were going to medal," she confessed. "It made us relax a little but I had to give it my very best."

After finishing last in the shot-put, an ordinary athlete would have been demoralized. But Nairi persevered. She ran two victories and did the same in two other field events. No doubt, the experience she gained as a



Vigen Sarkisov wins four of his five events to take his first pentathlon title. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

junior paid dividends.

Still, it was no cakewalk for the youngster. After the pent, three relays were at her beckoning call—and Greater Boston won them all.

A year ago as a 16-year-old, Nairi

won the 200 and was second in the long jump and triple jump for 11 points. The pent was a natural progression, given the girl's athletic prowess.

"It's great competing for a chapter

in which my dad competed and now coaches," she confirmed. "My mom [Heather] competed for Detroit and overcame a lot of obstacles these past few years with illness and everything. They've been an inspiration to me."

Coaches Reflect

A Textbook Finish for Providence

By Tom Vartabedian

BOSTON, Mass.—The question remains, “How does Providence do it year after year, time after time, generation following generation?”

One word defines their script, “Tradition!”

It’s what moved Tevya in “Fiddler on the Roof,” and it’s the same calculation that keeps the “Varantians” in gear. They don’t know how to compete without it.

This 39th victory was textbook perfect. After a substandard night in the pool, they bounced

back with a gold in tennis, then chipped away auspiciously on the track Sunday.

They did it with superior athletes, some gifted recruits, and precise coaching. Throw in discipline, teamwork, and a few unsung heroes for good measure and it spells victory.

“Much was made this weekend about our recruitment efforts,” said Coach Bob Tutunjian. “I have always felt it important to reach out to more Armenians and get them involved in the AYF. Not all of them become well-rounded members. But some do, and that’s how this organization grows.”

After all was said and done,

8 newcomers were included on a team of 42, while another 10 came aboard as Junior transfers.

“Every member was willing to try different events when necessary,” Tutunjian added. “Practices were somewhat difficult due to conflicting schedules, vacations, and other commitments. It was gratifying to win this year in Mal Varadian’s memory.”

After last year’s shortfall, which resulted in only 34 points and 6th overall, Tutunjian and his sidekick Steve Elmasian vowed to make amends. It was a low point that couldn’t be measured by the duo.

“We recognized that our cur-

rent membership achieved good results in 2009 and 2010,” Tutunjian added. “We reached out to those chapter members who couldn’t make it to Chicago and told them of our efforts. Almost all committed to making a good showing in Boston.”

Elmasian has been piloting the “Varantians” for as long as he cares to remember, and reminds you time and again that it’s not all about athletics but about building relationships and growing involved in church and community circles.

This year, he had the late Mal Varadian in his corner, a guy who was the paragon of AYF-ism, along with other members of his family.

On the way home from Olympics, Elmasian stopped off at the cemetery and placed the championship trophy by his gravesite.

“Mal knew how to get you involved, no matter what side of the tracks you were from,” Elmasian reflected. “He taught you respect and dignity. He instilled pride and honor among the youth. Winning the Olympics for him was icing on the cake this year.”

The depth charts complemented the talent. No point in singling out individuals. In Elmasian’s mind, a fourth-place point was just as vital as a gold medal. In the end, he had words of praise for his coaching sidekick Tutunjian.

“His organizational skills and persistency are the reasons for our success,” Elmasian noted. “Others like Mike Varadian, Fred Hintlian, and Harry Kachadoorian have offered their advice and encouragement at practice. A dozen Providence AYF alumni where available throughout the day Sunday to help with the events and support those competing.”

Will the “Varantians” show in Washington, or pull another Chicago?

“We need to start planning early so we can get a huge team to D.C. and defend our title,” he said. “There’s no reason to think we won’t be there with a full team.”

Meanwhile, the Greater Boston camp remains buoyant. It’s an AYF chapter with 150 Juniors and Seniors with abundant talent, along with the numbers. And they’re doing it with home-grown athletes.

“Boston does not comb the internet looking for athletes across the northeast,” said Coach Ara Krafian, an Olympic King this year with Rich Chebookjian. “We persuade and convince our members to compete.”

The “Nejdehs” started the weekend on solid ground by sweeping men’s tennis. They wrapped it up with 43 of the last 45 available Olympic points in the 2 pentathlons and 3 final relays. Even then, they fell 30 points short.

“Our members represented themselves very respectfully,” he said. “I’m proud of all our athletes, regardless of how they might have finished because they came together as a team.”

Krafian pointed to athletes like Kevork Ourfalian, who he competed with a serious injury, as “unsung heros.”

“He was a key part of two winning relays and was at the track from start to finish cheering for every Boston athlete,” Krafian added. “And there were others like Maral Merian, Lia Aftandilian. Talene Sagherian, and Meg Babikian who competed well in their first Olympics. It’s especially exciting for me to watch them grow from young Juniors to young ladies.”

The same could be said for his two daughters, Nairi and Araxi, premiere athletes who combined for 25 individual points this year and keyed the relays.

Away from the field, Krafian lauded his coach Rich Chebookjian for sharing the Olympic King’s tribute with him and applauded Michael Guzelian and Tamar Kanarian for orchestrating this Olympics as co-chairs, making it one of the most successful in history.

Also singled out was his wife Heather who was a beehive of activity all weekend.

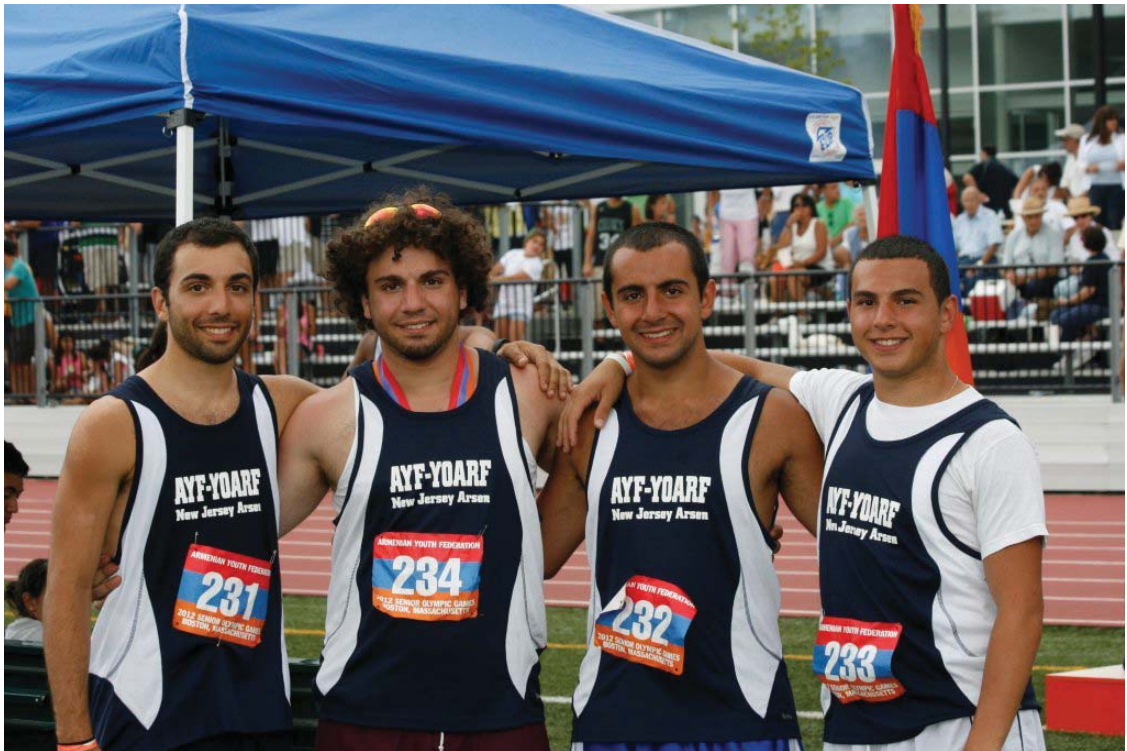
“She worked tirelessly all summer doing her work and mine,” Krafian noted. “I’m a lucky man.”

Which brings us to Philly, a team that’s certainly in the title hunt for years to come, led by new coach Avi Keshgegian. The “Sebouhs” wound up third with 124 points and were in hot pursuit until the end. They showed up with close to 30 athletes, dug deep, and made an impression just the same.

“What our team lacked in overall size, we compensated with talent and heart,” said Keshgegian. “We were missing athletes in several different events, were hurt by injuries, and weren’t pleased with the ruling on two different relays. Those kinds of things are out of our control.”

Keshgegian went out on a limb and predicted success, starting with a gold in D.C. Expect it to become a four-chapter race, counting a resurgence by Detroit.

Sarajian Brothers Become of Age



The Sarajian brothers of New Jersey formed their own relay team and softball infield at the 79th AYF Olympic Games in Boston. (L-R) Ara, Raffi, Garo, and Haig make this quartet a ‘fearsome foursome.’ (Tom Vartabedian photo)

By Tom Vartabedian

BOSTON, Mass.—New Jersey didn’t have to go very far to put together a 4x100 relay team or an entire infield in softball.

The Sarajian brothers were there for the call—all four of them.

For the first time in AYF Olympic history, four brothers were entered in the same relay. Two members of one family would be true to tradition. Three would be somewhat unique. But four?

“It took a little waiting to reach the qualifying age but we were patient,” said Ara, the senior sibling. “We waited for Haig to turn 16.”

Once Haig became a senior member, it was a no-brainer for the crew.

Haig took the baton, handed it off to Ara, who gave it to Garo before Raffi finished the race.

They happen to be the sons of Richard and Nora (Daghlian) Sarajian, whose dad is a member of the Olympic Governing Body.

“When we were home, we encouraged one another to compete,” remarked Ara. “Making this happen was really a cool thing. Our parents have been an inspiration to us.”

The 24-year-old was the last of three generations to graduate from Merrimack College, North Andover, in 2010 with a marketing degree and now works for the Washington Nationals as an accounts executive.

No sooner did this Olympics end that he was spearheading the Junior Games at Camp Haiastan from Sept. 28-29.

Raffi, 21, earned a silver medal in the shot-put. He’s a senior at Springfield College, majoring in sports sciences and playing rugby. He hopes to visit Armenia next summer on an internship.

Garo is a junior at Johns Hopkins University, majoring

in mathematics and making the Dean’s List. He was head counselor at Camp Haiastan this past summer.

As for Haig, he’s a junior at Spring Valley High, an honor’s student in advanced placement classes, plays football and baseball, and is on the math team.

The day before, the Sarajians plugged up the entire infield in softball, made key defensive stops, hit the ball with authority, and led the “Arsens” to their third consecutive championship, winning each of their games by at least 15 runs.

Even with one at Johns Hopkins and another working for the Nationals, there’s no chance they’ll be playing for the “Ani” Chapter next year when the Olympics resume in Washington. Their roots are stabilized in Jersey.

And don’t be surprised if they earn a relay medal to show for it.

“Next year we want to place,” says Ara.

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Krafian, Chebookjian Named AYF Olympic Kings

By Tom Vartabedian

BOSTON, Mass.—Of all the athletes Rich Chebookjian has coached and competed against, few have been closer to him than Ara Krafian, who helped propel the Boston dynasty of the 1980’s.

Now, they share another role together—AYF Olympic Kings.

The two took their throne over these 79th annual games and were applauded before some 800 guests Friday during the Alumni Night gathering at the ACEC in Watertown.

Their selection came as no big surprise since both were worthy of the honor. In Chebookjian’s case, it was perhaps a bit overdue. And it came at a time when he was bereaving his mom’s death.

Rosanne Chebookjian was an AYF and Camp Haiastan icon who, together with her late husband Shant, served the community with uncompromising loyalty and conviction.

“It would have made them very proud,” said Chebookjian, who finished his AYF career as the second-leading scorer of all time. “They were very instrumental in my success, both as an athlete and as an individual.”

Krafian was cast from a similar role, scoring a bevy of points in the pool and the pentathlon. As coach to the Greater Boston team, his four daughters portray a strong future as Olympians with two currently racking up gold medals while wife Heather (Apigian) offers her unbridled support to the team.

Richard Chebookjian

Born in Waltham, Mass., Chebookjian was raised in a family with strong ties to Camp Haiastan, the AYF, and the Armenian Cause. His passion for the AYF stems from his

parents, both of whom have been recognized as National Honorary members.

In 1971, at the age of 17, he participated in his first Olympics for the Boston “Siamanto” Chapter and produced one hallowed page after another in his quest toward stardom. The next decade-plus saw him accumulating points at a record pace until finally reaching 161. His 400-meter record still stands, while the 200 has since been eclipsed—by his nephew (Stephen Vosbikian).

Dominating the sprints, Chebookjian won multiple high-scoring titles by sweeping the 100, 220, and 440-yard dashes. It wasn’t until 1981 that the “Siamantos” won their first Olympic Cup.

That first championship led to a dynasty throughout the 1980’s, culminating with five straight victories.

Chebookjian’s achievements were not confined to the track. He was frequently seen at conventions and seminars while elected to the Central Executive. He pioneered the Senior Seminar and instilled leadership skills into the membership.

As an active member of the Boston community, he chaired April 24 committees and was actively involved with ANCA work.

After marrying his wife, Chebookjian moved to the Philadelphia area and coached the “Sebouhs” to the chapter’s first Olympic Trophy and four Cups in five years.

He can still be found at the Junior Athletic Games and on the sidelines during track events coaching his nieces and nephews while also keeping order in the meet.

Along with his two sisters, Susan and Sema (Arakelian), they continue to carry the legacy set forth by their parents.

Ara Krafian

Whether by competing, coaching, officiating, or parenting, Krafian has been omnipresent at the

Olympics over the past quarter century. In the words of late Hairenik Editor Jimmy Tashjian, call Ara “the ubiquitous Armenian,” meaning he’s everywhere at once.

Quiet, humble, intense, spirited. Krafian qualifies in each of these superlatives. It hasn’t been easy, sharing his compassion with a wife who’s battled an illness, four active daughters, and recently moving into a new home. For that, he deserves a rack of medals.

Born in Montreal, he joined the Watertown “Gaidzags” when his family moved to the U.S., launching an impressive athletic streak that started in the Juniors. He finished in the top 15 all-time with 99 points, setting and resetting swim records—whether for Watertown or Boston.

In 1987, he entered his first pentathlon and wound up victorious with 2,632 points. Krafian was also part of record-setting relays in the pool and track, and played on title basketball teams.

Athletics aside, Krafian has served as an AYF Junior Advisor for Boston and co-chaired the AYF National Junior Seminar Committee.

Upon graduating from the AYF, he married the love of his life, co-chaired the 1989 Olympic Steering Committee, and served nine years on the AYF Governing Body. He was instrumental in proposing a seven-year term limit with transitions for all newly appointed Governing Body members while implementing the computerization of the results for the Olympic Games.

As an added note of interest, his passion and selflessness was never more evident than in 1999 when Heather had to be induced just days

79th AYF...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Most Improved Chapter
Worcester

Softball Champion
New Jersey

High Scorers (15 points each)
Michelle Hagopian (Granite City) – golf, discus, baseball throw
Lynne Tutunjian (Providence) – 25 freestyle, 50 breaststroke, 25 butterfly
Mike Kaiserian (Philadelphia) – 50 butterfly, 50 freestyle, 100 freestyle
Stephen Tutunjian (Providence) – high jump, long jump, triple jump
Greg Hamalian (Providence) – 800, 1600, 3200

Pentathlon Winners
Nairi Krafian (Greater Boston) – 2,080 points
Vigen Sarkisov (Greater Boston) – 2,560 points

Outstanding Records
Lindsey Santerian (Philly) – triple jump (33’1”)
Stephen Tutunjian (Providence) – long jump (22’2 1/4”) and triple jump (48’41/2”)
Taleen Shahrigian (Detroit) – 800 (2:25.1) and 1600 (5:17.5)
Greg Hamalian (Providence) – 1600 meters (4:33)

Ernest Nahigian Sportsmanship Award
Raffi Markarian (Detroit)

Olympic Kings
Richard Chebookjian and Ara Krafian

Varadian Spirit Award
Astor Guzelian

Cory Tosoian Alumni Golf Award
John Aharonian (Winchester) – 78

before the New Jersey Olympics. It was crucial he be at the games with the new computerized system.

Rest assured. He was there to welcome his new prize—then rushed to Jersey just in time for the swim meet.

In his spare time, Krafian volunteers on many construction projects for St. Stephen’s School and Camp Haiastan. With his youngest daughter just nine, it appears he’ll be around for the long haul.

He Did It for His Grandfather Mal!

By Tom Vartabedian

BOSTON, Mass.—You won’t find his name among the record-holders or prodigious scorers in AYL Olympic history...

But Melkon Megerdichian performed an act of glory that’s worthy of applause: He ran the alumni mile in memory of his grandfather Mal Varadian.

The only inspiration he really needed to finish the distance was his grandfather’s gold medal in his pocket, the one he received upon being named an Olympic King in 1958.

Varadian passed on this summer after working a picnic at Camp Haiastan. His memory at these Olympic Games will long be enshrined.

Members of the Providence AYF dedicated their performance to this perennial torchbearer and eked out a grueling championship. No doubt, Mal played a big influence with the athletes.

“My grandfather gave me this gold medal as a gift and I shall cherish it forever,” said the grandson. “Running the mile was a small token of gesture in his memory. I recited his name along the track.”

Melkon wore the medal around his neck while marching with the “Varantians.” Throughout his AYF days, he never won a gold but did



Mal Varadian

earn a silver and four bronze medals. “My grandfather gave me the gold to inspire me to do my very best in anything I do,” he added. “I

display it in my room. It gives me all the motivation I need in life to succeed. It reminds me that his spirit is inside me always.”

The Varadians’ Olympic ‘Spirit’ Lives On!

By Tom Vartabedian

The Aug. 5, 2012 passing of Melkon “Mal” Varadian was a milestone in this AYF Olympic-oriented family from Providence. With sister Maro Varadian Kachadoorian, now the only remaining member of the senior generation of family athletes, it is fitting to recollect some of the family’s special moments of Olympics past.

Starting in 1939 with Providence’s Varad Varadian and his (soon to be) brother-in-law Jack Kachadoorian from Worcester competing neck and neck in the dashes, the procession of Varadian family Olympic participants began—and continues to this day, unbroken for some seven decades. Mal Varadian dominated the dashes in 1942 just before World

War II reduced the Olympics in size and stature. During those times, two more members of the family, Haig and Maro, began their tenures in the Olympics Games. Maro became the first female high scorer from Providence in the 1943 Olympics in Franklin, Mass., and Haig went on to eventually help form the Olympic Governing Body.

In 1945-47, the Olympics began to flourish once again as the soldiers returned from the war. Varad, Mal, and Haig had been in the war together in Europe and were thankfully reunited back in the states in 1946. During the years that followed, there were fierce daily practices with Mal and Haig in constant competition with each other. Elder brother Varad took on the role of team captain, mandating that no one

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18

Group	Event		First/Chapter	Second/Chapter	Third/Chapter	Fourth/Chapter
WOMENS	GOLF	NAME CHAPTER SCORE	Hagopian, Michelle Granite City 52	Battaglino, Anya Greater Boston 55	Hagopian, Ani Detroit 69	Sadaniantz, Natalia Providence 71
	TENNIS	NAME CHAPTER SCORE	Yeransian, Emma Providence 6-4, 6-1	Barberian, Olivia North Andover 0	Santerian, Lindsey Philadelphia 8-3	Charchaflian, Kenar Worcester 0
	25 YARD FREE	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Tutunjian, Lynne Providence 12.75	Bablouzian, Maggy Worcester 14.00	Battaglino, Anya Greater Boston 14.25	Sudjian, Stephanie Philadelphia 14.82
	25 YARD BUTTERFLY	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Tutunjian, Lynne Providence 13.37	Mamourian, Molly Philadelphia 13.88	Khatchadourian, Faye Montreal 15.12	Sadaniantz, Natalia Providence 16.19
	50 YARD BACKSTROKE	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Topouzian, Meline Detroit 35.94	Varadian, Nevart Providence 39.00	Phillips, Alysha Providence 43.50	Bahtiarian, Lucine Greater Boston 47.70
	50 YARD BREAST STROKE	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Tutunjian, Lynne Providence 36.06	Khatchadourian, Faye Montreal 37.31	Sadaniantz, Natalia Providence 39.75	Bablouzian, Maggy Worcester 40.44
	50 YARD FREE	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Mamourian, Molly Philadelphia 27.62	Bablouzian, Maggy Worcester 30.01	Sudjian, Stephanie Philadelphia 33.83	Hintlian, Sara Providence 37.33
	100 YARD FREE	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Mamourian, Molly Philadelphia 1:01.62	Topouzian, Meline Detroit 1:05.83	Varadian, Nevart Providence 1:11.06	Aftandilian, Lia Greater Boston 1:16.00
	4 x 25 FREE RELAY	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Philadelphia Team Philadelphia 59.19	Providence Team Providence 1:02.01	Detroit Team Detroit 1:03.94	Greater Boston Team Greater Boston 1:04.44
	BASEBALL THROW	NAME CHAPTER DISTANCE	Hagopian, Michelle Granite City 167' 4"	Boyajian, Claudia New Jersey 161' 10"	Tossounian, Araxie Detroit 157' 8"	Rueb, Alyssa Providence 151' 3"
	DISCUS	NAME CHAPTER DISTANCE	Hagopian, Michelle Granite City 86' 11"	Sarajian, Ani New Jersey 75' 10"	Sarkisian, Anahid Providence 70' 6"	Panian, Reena Greater Boston 68' 8"
	JAVELIN	NAME CHAPTER DISTANCE	Santerian, Lindsey Philadelphia 98' 0"	Rueb, Alyssa Providence 93' 0"	Tossounian, Araxie Detroit 83' 10"	Battaglino, Anya Greater Boston 79' 6"
	HIGH JUMP	NAME CHAPTER HEIGHT	Garabedian, Andrea Providence 4' 8"	Rueb, Alyssa Providence 4' 6"	Soorikian, Alyssa Philadelphia 4' 6"	Varadian, Emily Providence 3' 10"
	LONG JUMP	NAME CHAPTER DISTANCE	Merian, Maral Greater Boston 14' 10 3/4"	Soorikian, Alyssa Philadelphia 14' 7"	Garabedian, Lauren Providence 13' 9"	Avakian, Kohar Worcester 13' 5"
	SHOT PUT	NAME	Sarajian, Ani	Avakian, Nairi	Krikorian , Siran	Sarkisian, Danielle
		CHAPTER DISTANCE	New Jersey 28' 11 1/4"	Worcester 28' 4 3/4"	Providence 28' 1 1/2"	Philadelphia 27' 10 1/2"
	TRIPLE JUMP	NAME CHAPTER DISTANCE	Santerian, Lindsey Philadelphia 33' 1"	Soorikian, Alyssa Philadelphia 32' 2"	Jelalian, Theresa New Jersey 25' 6 1/4"	Varadian, Emily Providence 25' 4 1/2"
	50 METERS	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Krafian, Araxi Greater Boston 6.87	Soorikian, Angela Philadelphia 7.00	Pilibosian, Marina Detroit 7.40	Shahkian, Nina Philadelphia 7.51
	100 METERS	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Krafian, Araxi Greater Boston 13.33	Soorikian, Angela Philadelphia 14.01	Pilibosian, Marina Detroit 14.20	Garabedian, Andrea Providence 14.60
	100 METER HURDLES	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Garabedian, Andrea Providence 17.44	Arakelian, Lia Philadelphia 18.00	Charchaflian, Kenar Worcester 19.82	Kechejian, Anahis Greater Boston 20.00
	200 METERS	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Merian, Maral Greater Boston 29.53	Soorikian, Angela Philadelphia 30.90	Arakelian, Lia Philadelphia 31.14	Mccarthy, Alycia New Jersey 31.70
	400 METERS	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Papazian, Emily Providence 1:05.40	Shahrigian, Taleen Detroit 1:05.60	Merian, Maral Greater Boston 1:10.31	Bahtiarian, Christine Greater Boston 1:14.00
	800 METERS	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Shahrigian, Taleen Detroit 2:25.01	Papazian, Emily Providence 2:30.60	Najarian, Mary Providence 2:38.70	Aftandilian, Lia Greater Boston 2:45.90
	1600 METERS	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Shahrigian, Taleen Detroit 5:17.50	Najarian, Mary Providence 5:39.40	Papazian, Emily Providence 5:47.60	Aftandilian, Lia Greater Boston 6:00.51
	PENTATHLON	NAME CHAPTER POINTS	Krafian, Nairi Greater Boston 2,080	Menissian, Sylvahna Providence 1,220	Sarkisian, Kelsey Philadelphia 1,144	No Entrant No Entrant 0
	4 x 100 METER RELAY	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Greater Boston Team Greater Boston 56.50	Philadelphia Team Philadelphia 58.15	Providence Team Providence 58.80	Worcester Team Worcester 1:01.60
	4 x 200 METER RELAY	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Greater Boston Team Greater Boston 2:02.3	Providence Team Providence 2:06.4	Philadelphia Team Philadelphia 2:13.3	Worcester Team Worcester 2:22.7
MENS	GOLF	NAME CHAPTER SCORE	Tashjian, Pete Philadelphia 80	Ensign, Ace Providence 84	Santerian, Mark Philadelphia 87	Piliguian, Mark Toronto 87
	TENNIS	NAME CHAPTER	Bejian, Matthew Greater Boston	Festekjian, Armen Greater Boston	Habeshian, Garin Greater Boston	Pjojian, Jason Providence

Group

Event

First/Chapter

Second/Chapter

Third/Chapter

Fourth/Chapter

	SCORE	6-1, 6-0	0	8-3	0
50 YARD BACKSTROKE	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Movsesian, Eric Greater Boston 32.19	Hagopian, Stephen Granite City 33.94	Santerian, Mark Philadelphia 35.62	Alexanian, Ari Chicago 37.20
50 YARD BREAST STROKE	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Arslanian, Garo Toronto 34.25	Torcomian, Chris Philadelphia 36.80	Arakelian, Armen Greater Boston 38.31	Zobian, Sevan Providence 40.50
50 YARD BUTTERFLY	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Kaiserian, Michael Philadelphia 28.88	Arslanian, Garo Toronto 30.94	Movsesian, Eric Greater Boston 33.75	No Entrant No Entrant 0
50 YARD FREE	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Kaiserian, Michael Philadelphia 23.12	Movsesian, Eric Greater Boston 26.37	Hagopian, Stephen Granite City 27.06	Alexanian, Ari Chicago 28.22
100 YARD FREE	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Kaiserian, Michael Philadelphia 1:01.37	Alexanian, Ari Chicago 1:06.50	Arslanian, Garo Toronto 1:10.43	Artinian, Haroot Greater Boston 1:15.83
4 x 50 MEDLEY RELAY	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Philadelphia Team Philadelphia 2:11.10	Providence Team Providence 2:15.12	Greater Boston Team Greater Boston 2:28.53	Detroit Team Detroit 2:51.40
4 x 50 FREE RELAY	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Philadelphia Team Philadelphia 1:59.62	Providence Team Providence 2:01.56	Greater Boston Team Greater Boston 2:10.34	Detroit Team Detroit 2:11.07
DISCUS	NAME CHAPTER DISTANCE	Campbell, Jonathan New Jersey 131' 9"	Hagopian, Stephen Granite City 106' 11"	Tutunjian, Michael Providence 91' 7"	Giragosian, Kristapor Providence 86' 11"
JAVELIN	NAME CHAPTER DISTANCE	Campbell, Jonathan New Jersey 148' 6"	Santerian, Mark Philadelphia 141' 6"	Chakmakjian, Daniel Greater Boston 118' 7"	Zobian, Sevan Providence 113' 9"
HIGH JUMP	NAME CHAPTER HEIGHT	Tutunjian, Stephen Providence 5' 6"	Hamalian, Mark Providence 5' 6"	Chakmakjian, Samuel Greater Boston 5' 4"	Mkrtschjan, Nareg Providence 5' 2"
LONG JUMP	NAME CHAPTER DISTANCE	Tutunjian, Stephen Providence 22' 2 1/4"	Melkonian, Michael Worcester 19' 5 1/2"	Beremian, Mooshegh Providence 19' 3"	Chilingirian, Berj Greater Boston 19' 2"
SHOT PUT	NAME CHAPTER DISTANCE	Tutunjian, Michael Providence 37' 6 3/4"	Sarajian, Raffi New Jersey 37' 0 1/4"	Khatchadrian, Mardiros Philadelphia 36' 6 1/2"	Afarian, Aram New Jersey 35' 7"
TRIPLE JUMP	NAME CHAPTER DISTANCE	Tutunjian, Stephen Providence 48' 4 1/2"	Beremian, Mooshegh Providence 39' 11"	Hamalian, Mark Providence 37' 1"	Chiloyan, Varant Greater Boston 34' 9 1/2"
100 METERS	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Serian, John New Jersey 11.59	Arakelian, Aram Toronto 11.60	Damatian, Edgar Greater Boston 11.75	Topouzian, Shant Detroit 12.32
110 METER HURDLES	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Chakmakjian, Daniel Greater Boston 17.06	Chilingirian, Berj Greater Boston 17.60	Hamalian, Mark Providence 18.30	Arakelian, Alec Philadelphia 19.19
200 METERS	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Hintlian, Andrew Providence 24.00	Serian, John New Jersey 24.12	Arakelian, Aram Toronto 24.70	Topouzian, Shant Detroit 25.10
400 METERS	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Hintlian, Andrew Providence 54.40	Arakelian, Armen Greater Boston 55.60	Knaian, Nicolas Greater Boston 1:01.40	Hachikian, Aras Greater Boston 1:04.70
800 METERS	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Hamalian, Greg Providence 2:07.8	Hintlian, Andrew Providence 2:09.2	Arakelian, Armen Greater Boston 2:09.4	Bedian, Daron Chicago 2:21.8
1600 METERS	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Hamalian, Greg Providence 4:32.80	Bedian, Daron Chicago 5:13.15	Chiloyan, Vazrik Greater Boston 5:35.90	Chilingirian, Stepan Providence 5:42.10
3200 METERS	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Hamalian, Greg Providence 10:47.7	Bedian, Daron Chicago 10:57.8	Chiloyan, Vazrik Greater Boston 12:15.7	Chakmakjian, Samuel Greater Boston 12:38.1
PENTATHLON	NAME CHAPTER POINTS	Sarkisov, Vigen Greater Boston 2,560	Markarian, Ara Detroit 2,268	Keshgegian, Aram Philadelphia 2,171	Boyajian, Adam New Jersey 2,108
4 x 100 METER RELAY	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Greater Boston Team Greater Boston 48.03	Philadelphia Team Philadelphia 48.16	Providence Team Providence 48.28	New Jersey Team New Jersey 49.90
4 x 400 METER RELAY	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Providence Team Providence 3:56.9	Greater Boston Team Greater Boston 3:58.2	Philadelphia Team Philadelphia 4:01.0	New Jersey Team New Jersey 4:12.5
4 x 100 CO-ED RELAY	NAME CHAPTER TIME	Greater Boston Team Greater Boston 1:51.3	Detroit Team Detroit 1:53.5	Philadelphia Team Philadelphia 1:55.5	Providence Team Providence 2:00.7

Sonny Gavoor’s Biggest Win

By HARRY DERDERIAN

There were continued Sonny Gavoor sightings at the recent AYF Olympics in Boston. Not unusual, one would say, because Sonny and his wife and best friend Violet have missed only some five Olympics since he stopped competing 53 years ago. What was unusual is that Sonny had a heart valve replaced on June 25, ironically the birthday of son Mark.

This was Sonny’s biggest win, in a lifetime of many wins. His recovery was remarkable, given his 83 years of age. His life long regimen of healthy living and exercise was the foundation of optimism for the open-heart surgery with a team led by Dr. Stephen Keteyian, the brother of national network sports commentator Armen Keteyian.

For many years, Sonny would do his genuinely brisk walk daily along Five Mile Road and Newburgh Road in Livonia, Mich. It surely paid off!

“What also helps a lot is having a super wife of some 60 years,” Sonny told me with his characteristic smile and gleam in his eye.

The idea of going to Boston was unthought of and touchy for a while, but Sonny’s recovery was rapid and in the end, Sonny and Violet made the trip to be with their kids, grandchildren, and a wide array of extended AYF family and relationships spanning so many years.

With that longevity, Sonny—and Vi—have become patriarchs of sorts at the Labor Day games.

Sonny knows and coached many of the parents, and now he knows and offers suggestions their kids.

Where did Sonny’s motivation come from?

At this point, Sonny shows a bit of his emotional nature as he mentions Merton Bozoian, Arthur

Giragosian, and Jim Mandalian, leaders in the eastern region who fostered a sense of nationalistic pride and sense of community

with an accent on educating and engaging the youth.

With regard to the youth, Sonny has become a leader in his own right. “It’s all about the kids,” Sonny has often said as he reflects on the AYF and Homenetmen. “We have to encourage our youth to be together in the AYF family and in the community, as it is the basis of true relationships that last a lifetime. The kids also are our future, whether in taking on future roles supporting the church or any of our organizations.”

His favorite Olympics?

“Easy. Going back when I was in the Watertown AYF, we had six participants and beat Providence. The second, our first Detroit AYF Olympic win that I coached,” Sonny states with pride.”

“We have had some great talent here in Detroit and it is satisfying to help a motivated Olympic participant seek higher levels,” he added. The AYF parents in Detroit have been very supportive, taking their kids to track practice, Junior

Olympics all over the Mid-West, and Senior Olympics all over the region, with a deep sense of conviction. “We have a super AYF family here in Detroit,” he said.

For Sonny, it is all about the kids. He has been a coach and friend to so many. In 1990, the regional Homenetmen games were to be held in Detroit, and he was asked to help organize the games and also serve as coach of the Detroit unit. As a result, he continued as coach and in an advisory capacity for the worldwide Homenetmen games, taking teams to Beirut, Greece, and Toronto, and bringing his expertise to improving the Homenetmen World Games.

Sonny passed on knowledge from his days with early AYF Olympic Governing Bodies, serving with the likes of Avo Alashaian, Armen Boyajian, Shant Chebookjian, and Dave Papazian.

In the local collegiate environment, Sonny—and daughter Nancy—have coached Schoolcraft

College and elevated that school to national level participation in cross country meets.

Let’s not forget the Gavoor family achievements. Sonny and Violet feel great pride in the AYF Olympic achievement of their children, led by Nancy’s astounding total of 144 points, the girls’ co-top scorer in Olympics with long time chum Jill Tosoian Dolik.

Nancy was an Eastern Michigan University standout trackster, son Mark played lacrosse at the University of Michigan (UM), grandson Aram on the UM crew team, and grand-daughter Armene tennis at St. Mary’s College, same as mom, Judy. Apples don’t fall far from the tree.

But all along, AYF members who have come and gone—in Detroit or elsewhere—have benefitted from a man who has seen the AYF as his extended family.

The 79th AYF Olympics: Sonny’s family and extended family joyfully celebrated Sonny’s biggest win.

The Varadians’...

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would miss the practice sessions. The three brothers, Haig, Varad, and Mal, competed against each other for the first time in 1946 in New Britain, Conn. Mal explained that he always lifted his arms, not in victory but to keep the finish line from cutting his neck because of his height!

It was in 1947 that John “Jay” Varadian, the youngest of the four brothers, began his 14-year career as an Olympian, this time competing with brothers Mal and Haig in the dashes and jumps. Also at that time, Anahid Karentz, who later became Anahid Varadian (Haig’s wife), grew to prominence in the women’s jumping events, becoming the female high scorer from Providence in the 1946, 1947, and 1948 Olympics. Haig and Jay successfully competed for a number of years after older brothers Varad and Mal retired. They were part of that well-known Providence team who, along with new brother-in-law Varoujan Karentz and seven other talented AYFers, traveled to the Detroit Olympics in 1950 and together brought home the trophy. During those years, the Providence Chapter won the Olympics 9 times in 11 years. Each of the four brothers, as well as brother-in-law Jack and sister-in-law Anahid, would later become an AYF Olympic King/Queen.

Jay’s years overlapped with the second generation of Varadian Olympians. Niece Debbie and nephews Harry and Levon (Kachadoorian), along with cousins Michael, Paul, Richard, and John, all competed in the AYF Junior Olympics in the early 1960’s. Joining them shortly after were cousins Sandra, Diana, Charlie, Malcolm, Stephen, Christine, Sylvia, and Sarkis. The elder Varadians constantly had the gang of cousins racing against each other at picnics and family

outings. This led to a number of AYF Olympic records and scoring titles from the family. For over 15 years, nearly the entire Varadian clan participated and traveled to almost every AYF Olympics, including chartering a plane for the East Coast AYF Chapters to attend the Olympics in Los Angeles in 1972.

The next era began in 1981 as Michael’s son Nick ran in his first Junior Olympics while Michael himself competed in his final Senior Olympics.

That started a third generation of Varadian family members in the AYF Olympics, with some still competing, including Beth, Siran, Armen, Sarah, Sonig, Nevart, Richie, Simone; Anto, Melkon, and Ani (Megerdichian); Sylvahna and Sarky (Menissian); Nishon, Ari, Taline, and Alyssa (Kachadoorian); and Melanie and Ani (Kachadoorian/Salerno). The family could easily fill the track by themselves in an Alumni Mile!

The fourth generation of Varadians is now already making its mark with Mal’s great grandchildren Emily, Nicholas, and Carl currently competing in the Varadian family’s 73rd consecutive year of AYF Olympic participation! This was clearly the vision that the elder Varadians had for the AYF and Olympics—that is, subsequent generations participating, enjoying and maintaining the organization and its wonderful traditions.

The Varadian family is very grateful for the AYF and the Olympic Games, which still keeps Armenian families, and the organization, whole and involved in many communities. The AYF has created the Annual Varadian AYF Spirit Award, given to the individual(s) who best exemplify the fraternal “spirit” of the AYF. This award is a fitting extension of the entire family’s love for the AYF and for the people who, to quote one of Mal’s most famous statements, continue to “Make it Better than it Was.”

Scenes from the Swimming Competition



Medalists in the 50 free were, from left, Stephen Hagopian (Granite City), third; Mike Kaiserian (Philly), first, and Eric Movsesian (Greater Boston), second. (Tom Vartabedian photo)



Greater Boston’s Anoush Arakelian casts a reflection swimming the breast stroke. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

Olympic Tidbits

By TOM VARTABEDIAN

AYF Olympic reunion spans 3,000 miles

BOSTON, Mass.—They call the Korean Conflict “a forgotten war.” But don’t tell that to John Krikorian and Gabriel Arakelian. They long to remember it.

It all started on Dec. 2, 1952, almost precisely 60 years ago. They met at Fort Devens, Ayer, preparing to serve their country. Krikorian was active with his Hartford, Conn. community, and Arakelian was rather conspicuous around Springfield, Mass.

Night had fallen around the barracks and Krikorian was bent on getting some shuteye in the lower bunk when...

“Boom! Boom! Boom!” The beat of a drum jolted him awake. He had no idea who the intruder was but some guy in the top bunk.

“I’m playing my *dumbeg*,” Arakelian revealed. “I happen to be Armenian and this is my instrument.”

“I’m Armenian, too, but that’s no reason to keep a whole platoon from getting some sleep,” Krikorian told the plebe. “The guys are getting annoyed.”

From that encounter six decades ago came a distant acquaintance that never really festered. Both went their separate ways after the war. Arakelian became a barber and did construction. Krikorian went into publishing in Glendale, Calif., and rarely missed an Olympics.

He happened to be seated at a table, scanning the other guests, when he caught an unfamiliar sight. Could it be this guy Arakelian?

Indeed, one and the same. They embraced and reconnected, sharing their sentiments about the war and the *dumbeg* incident. As Krikorian reached into his wallet and pulled out his draft card, so did Arakelian. And there was the date, Dec. 2, 1952, when they both registered for military service with the U.S. Army.

The fact each of them was 80 years old paid little significance to the moment. They were alive and well, together with their spouses, and had just bridged a 3,000-mile gap from California to Boston for this Olympics.

“I took my *dumbeg* to war and they wouldn’t let me take it on the front lines,” recalled Arakelian. “They exchanged it for a rifle. John and I were war buddies. It was like finding a lost brother.”

One other thing remained personal to him during the conflict: the Hairenik Weekly. Arakelian wouldn’t leave a foxhole without it.

“I’ve been reading it since I was 14,” he revealed. “And still a subscriber.”

Food for thought

Much as the athletics and dances are Olympic tradition, so,

too, is the customary room party hosted by Maro Dionisopoulos, a Providence *kefji*, and her friends. All the *kheyma* you can eat, along with other consumables. Just follow the smell of garlic off the elevator.

This evening was special. Out came a photo of the 1961 AYF Convention from the personal artifacts of Lucille (Hamparian) Derderian of Toronto, who attended that conclave over 50 years ago.

A closer look revealed myself and 40 others. Lucille ID-ed every one of those delegates like they were her brothers and sisters. Eight others from that photo were attending this Olympics: Rita Soovajian, her editorial sidekick from the AYF Junior Page, along with Joe Dagdigian, Garo Garabedian, Varoujan “Val” Asbedian who co-chaired the formalities that year, Mesrob Odian, Berj Aslanian from Florida, Mary (Tutelian) Derderian, Sona (Dadekian) Arslanian, and Vahan Assadourian from Canada.

“It’s amazing that after all these years, we’re still together in body and spirit,” said Lucille. “Says a lot for the AYF and its fraternal spirit that never seems to disappear.”

Angel over the Olympics

Remember Angel Perethian? No writer was more popular when it came to reporting on the Olympics than this woman with her “Angel Over the Olympics” pieces during the 1940’s, 1950’s, 1960’s, and 1970’s. People scrutinized her column to see if they were mentioned.

How anyone could remember thousands of names at such a gathering was beyond our comprehension. But this Angel didn’t skip a beat.

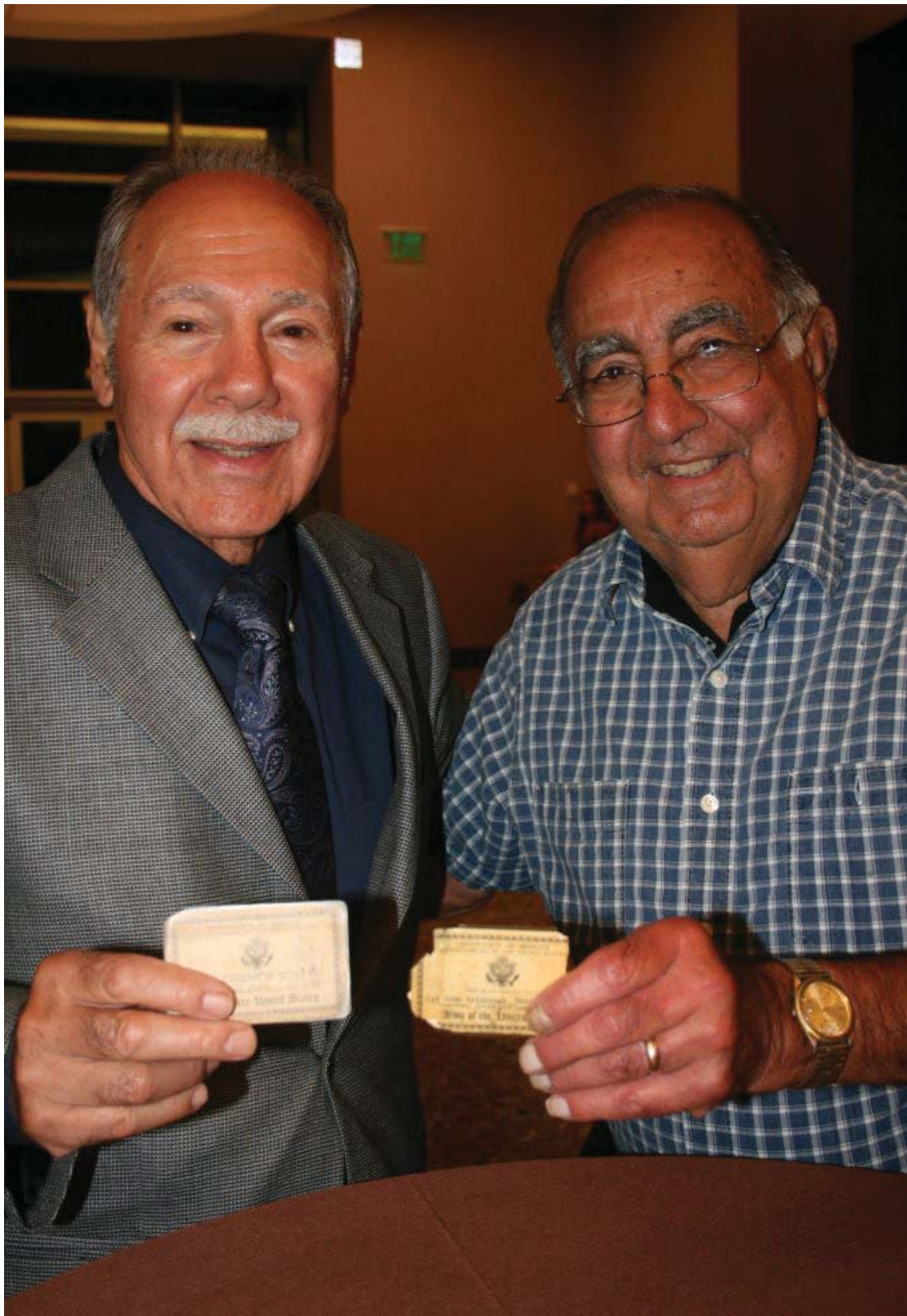
When she finally retired her column in 1979, I sent her a photo showing the two of us at the 1978 games in New Jersey—after her last report. It remained a forgotten gesture until this year’s Olympics in Boston when her friend Alyce Merian handed me an envelope from Angel. The picture was returned with a note.

“You can tell Tom I’ve kept this picture on top of my dresser ever since he sent it to me in 1978,” she wrote. “It’s one of my favorite pictures.”

Angel resides in Canton, Ga. these days, far removed from her Providence heydays, and still as brisk as ever despite the years.

After losing her husband Chick five years ago, Angel moved to Georgia to be closer to her son, daughter, and two grandchildren. Unfortunately, the Armenian community where she resides is sparse.

Merian happened to be on hand to distribute the shot-put medals in memory of Stanley Maligian, who was part of a three-member Brockton team that won an Olympics (unbelievable as that might seem). Maligian excelled in the shot-put and held the record at one time before dying coura-



Gabriel Arakelian, left and John Krikorian compare U.S. Army draft cards from the Korean Conflict at the AYF Olympic Games. (Tom Vartabedian photo)



Fourteen-month-old twins Adam & Taline Kopoyan make their Olympic debut at the softball games. They belong to Todd and Lara (Apovian) Kopoyan of Westboro, MA. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

geously in World War II.

A Kaligian family reunion

Of all the dancing lines at Sunday's Olympic Ball, none stood out more prominently than the Kaligians', who formed their own rank and file according to seniority.

Talk about a family affair!

First came the parents, Barkev and Seta, followed by their four sons, Dikran, Garin, Aram, and Zohrab, their spouses Seda, Hooshere, Lenna, and Holly, all joined by their 10 children.

Word has it they had trouble keeping up with the patriarch. Barkev still has the drive and footwork to lead the best line, and no dance opportunity goes without some response.

Rest assured, this is one Olympic family that makes its presence felt. Dikran represented the ARF Central Committee at Opening Ceremonies. Aram served on the medical staff. Zohrab is the ARF advisor to the AYF Central Executive and helped shoulder the load when Racine hosted the Olympics. Garin also does his share, putting to use his capabilities as a New York schoolteacher.

Barkev was named an Olympic King the last time Boston hosted an Olympics in 2001.

"It isn't very often the whole family comes together like this," said Dikran. "Our folks were extremely happy."

The entire clan had also attended the games earlier that afternoon.

Armenian Heritage Park

The hottest attraction around for out-of-towners was a visit to the Armenian Heritage Park in Boston. Many guests arrived at the site in Rose Kennedy Greenway with their families and reveled over the labyrinth and abstract structure.

Seeing the waters of a reflecting pool wash over the sides and re-emerge as a single jet of water at its center raised a few eyebrows.

Feedback was impressive. Several wondered how a \$6 million project like this could be met, given the bad economy -and all from the private sector. They also wondered how it could get the backing of key politicians and how it managed to elude Turkish dissenters.

Kudos to the committee and all those responsible for its emergence in having this finalized before the Olympic Games for all to enjoy.

Boston greets massive crowds

It was a textbook setting with massive crowds, a \$200 million high school facility, and a well-oiled Olympics that hummed at every turn.

Boston left no stone unturned in this outing, far exceeding any

speculation toward mediocrity.

The last time Boston hosted an Olympics, it was 2001. A merger with Watertown had unfolded and the chapter was just flexing its wings. What we have before us now is an operation that features 50 Seniors and 100 Juniors who function in unity.

A steering committee was headed by Mike Guzelian and Tamar Kanarian with lots of capable assistance. A 260-page Ad Book generated by John Aftandilian and Chris Hajian, along with their team of 7, brought in some \$58,000.

The cover featured the names of AYF chapters past and present, such as Niagara Falls, New Britain, Haverhill, St. Catherine's, and Brockton, the birthplace of the Olympics.

Finances aside, the crowds were overwhelming. The alumni reunion attracted 1,000 at the ACEC in Watertown Friday night. Saturday's dance featuring Armenchik brought in 1,400 guests. Sunday's Ball with Onnik, Johnny, Mal, and company enjoyed a similar turnout.

Over 400 rooms per night were booked at the Westin Waterfront, whose lobby was always bustling with activity. Hye Passes sold in advance numbered 473. A \$100,000 goal was being pursued.

"Over 15 committees were responsible for this success," reported Guzelian. "A lot of technology and sweat went into it. The public relations was fantastic."

Take it from Kenny Topalian, a member of the steering committee. He felt it was an Olympics worthy of boast.

"It's the best steering committee I've seen in at least the past five years, maybe longer," he compared. "Their commitment was evident these past two years."

Washington makes its plans

On to the nation's capital next year for what appears to be an historic Olympics on two fronts: Not only will Washington host the 80th anniversary of the AYF, but the 70th anniversary of its chapter.

Already secured is the Hilton Washington at \$129 a night (cheap by today's standards) and in the heart of D.C., within close proximity to the fields.

The chapter fielded an all-women's softball team and 15 athletes—the most since 2005 when they last hosted an Olympics.

"This was the most athletes we've ever fielded on the road, so it's a good sign," say organizers Sosy Tatarian and Arpa Vartanian. "This will bring our community together in a big way."

An American eagle mascot was seen meandering throughout the softball games and fields.

For those who wish to think ahead, Detroit has been handed the baton for 2014.



Boston welcoming booth included, from left, Sara Durgerian, Tina Sajonian, Lucy Hoosian and Susan Chebookjian. (Tom Vartabedian photo)



Alyce Merian, representing the former Brockton AYF, presents shotput medals to Raffi Sarajian (New Jersey) and Mike Tutunjian (Providence) in memory of Stanley Maligian, killed in WW2. (Tom Vartabedian photo)



Two-year-old Angele Chalian fingers a medal after finishing the kiddie race. She's the daughter of Hrag & Taline (Hagopian) Chalian of New Jersey.

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