



Armenian Rugs Society Newsletter

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NOTES FROM ARMENIA

I had the opportunity to visit Armenia in November, 2003, for about twelve days. The fall weather in Yerevan was crisp but mostly sunny, the surrounding mountains were covered with the first snow of the year. Downtown Yerevan had improved, with newly paved roads, and working traffic lights for pedestrian crossings, but beware, cars still have priority over pedestrians. I enjoyed the "Vernissage," the famous Yerevan antiques flea market, on Saturdays and Sundays. It is situated by the Hanrabedutyun Metro station, and one can find just about anything. There is a large area allocated to rugs, textiles and needlepoints.

One of my main purposes was to visit three museums: the History Museum on the main square, where they maintain a permanent collection of antique Armenian rugs; the "Joghovrtayin" Folk Arts Museum not too far from downtown; and the Sardarabad Museum, 40 kilometers from Yerevan, where they house over 3,500 rugs and 1,500 kilims.

As many of you recall, the organizing committee for the *PASSAGES* exhibit in San Francisco (July and August of 2002) had decided to allocate a percentage from the catalogue sales to the above-mentioned museums to help them maintain their rug collections. This time around, on behalf of the ARS, the help was to be \$500 for each museum and a commercial grade vacuum cleaner. I purchased two because the History Museum was well-equipped and did not need one.



Hratch Mardirosyan, Zaven Sargsyan and a Sardarabad Museum staff member.



Mr. Bogosyan at the Sardarabad Museum.

Zaven Sargsyan, the director of the Sergei Parajanov Museum, kindly accompanied me to deliver the goods. Our first visit was to the History Museum, where we met the vice president Garen Khatchadouryan, a dedicated and hard working man; he was busy completing one of the new wings of the museum housing newly discovered archeological treasures from Northern Armenia. Our next visit was to Sardarabad on a beautiful Sunday morning; on the way I learned from Zaven that on average, Armenia has 300 sunny days a year. Once in Sardarabad, we met the director of the museum, Mr. Hratch Mardirosyan, and the head of the rug department, Mr. Ashkhouch Bogosyan. They served us coffee, fresh fruit and cognac to toast. Our conversation revolved around three topics:

1. Why not have a textile museum in downtown Yerevan? It could be a popular destination for many visitors.
2. The possibility of organizing an exhibit in Yerevan with the participation of the ARS and the local authorities.
3. How can the ARS help them in the preservation and maintenance of the rugs in terms of cleaning shampoos and mothproofing products?

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MESSAGE FROM THE PRESIDENT

Since our last newsletter, we have been working to transfer the ARS archives from Jim Keshishian's shop in Chevy Chase, Maryland, to our new headquarters on the west coast. Some boxes have arrived already and more will come. Once we receive everything, we will go through it and file what is pertinent for future reference. We thank Jim's son Mark for his cooperation.

We have just learned that ALMA (the Armenian Library and Museum of America) was the recipient of over eighty rare and valuable books on oriental rugs. The books were collected by the late Herbet Offen and were donated by his nephew, Scott Offen. The ARS thanks Mr. Offen for his donation, and we congratulate ALMA on being the recipient of such a wonderful gift. ALMA now has both a fine collection of oriental rug books and an outstanding collection of Armenian inscribed rugs. We encourage our members to visit ALMA in Watertown, Massachusetts.

Haig and Nichole Klujian were married on January 2, 2004, in Naples, Florida. Araxi and I were able to attend. The ceremony was performed at a beautiful Greek Church, and at the altar, the newlywed couple stood on an old Kazak rug—the same Kazak rug on which Haig's parents were married some thirty years ago. Perhaps in thirty more years Haig and Nichole will see their children married standing on that same Kazak rug. We congratulate them and wish them the best.

Our thanks to Jonathan Varjabedian for his generous donation to the ARS. Jonathan, we appreciate your thoughtfulness and generosity. Without people like you we would not be able to accomplish our goals.

One of our members, Stephan G. Isberian, was recently the speaker at the Fine Arts Club of Kansas. The topic of his speech was "The Art of Rug Appreciation." The Isberian family oriental rug business dates back to 1898 in Chicago. It has been a family business for four generations. Stephan and Heather's two daughters are also very involved in the business. We thank the Isberian family for promoting and selling *PASSAGES* catalogues.

As we were planning the *PASSAGES* exhibition and symposium, committee members pledged to help the folk art museums in Armenia with some of the proceeds from the exhibition. Our hope was to assist them in preserving their Armenian rug collections. We are happy to announce that Levon Der Bedrossian, co-chairman of the planning committee, was the first to deliver to Armenia part of our pledge. We decided to donate vacuum cleaners and make a small donation to three folk art museums in Yerevan. We thank Levon for taking on that responsibility. Levon has been an integral part of the ARS in helping to preserve our national heritage and culture in Armenia and the diaspora.

Don't forget, we still have *PASSAGES* catalogues for sale. If you would like to donate a book to a library, museum, book club, etc., please contact us and we will send your gift to the recipient.

Also, please renew your membership if you have not done so. We will soon be sending membership cards to all paid-up members. Let us know if your address has changed.

—Joseph Bezdjian



Mimi Hurst, Heather Isberian, Dr. Clyde Glover, Stephan Isberian, Dr. Jan Sullivan.

