

The ARMENIAN EXCHANGE

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Outbound Exchange Group Visits Yerevan, June/July 2004



Students and three teachers returned home from Yerevan, Armenia following a three week visit, having participated in the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Secondary School Partnership Program to Promote Civil Society in Armenia, funded in part by the US Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs.

Participants stayed in the SW District and Shengavit Region of Yerevan for three weeks with student homestay families from their partner high schools. On Thursday, July 29 CYSCA students and teachers reported on their experiences at the National Association for Armenian Studies and Research, 395 Concord Avenue, Belmont at 7:00 PM. There was a Power Point photo presentation of their trip along with reports from the participants, followed by question and answer period and refreshments.

The group was led by Rev. Joanne Gulezian Hartunian, Program Manager for this project. Participants included Belmont teachers, Nancy Aykanian, Cheryl Shushan, and Alison Thalmann; Belmont High School students, Christopher Albano, Alexander Deranian, Sara Hartunian-Credit, Alec Kherlopian, Christopher Lo, Sarah Malconian, Peter Gallaher, Nicholas Sahagian and Caroline Smart; Arlington High School students, Alexandra Carver and Elly Dewan; and Cambridge Rindge and Latin students, Julian Chippendale, Julia Dekermendjian, and Benjamin Dewart. Dr. Mark Kalenian of Dothan, Alabama, volunteered as trip physician.

Belmont High School is linked with School #65 in the Shengavit Region; Arlington High School with #190 in the SW District of Yerevan, and Cambridge Rindge and Latin with School #1 the Knights and Daughters of Vardan School in Massiv district where a joint energy project is being funded through Sister Cities International.

In addition to attending classes at schools #190 and #65, the students along with their Armenian counterparts, donated over one ton of books, sports equipment, toys, shoes, boots, and clothing throughout the depressed regions of Armenia. In addition students hand delivered 150 chickens and a cow to recipient families in the Nalbandian Region of Armavir. Students volunteered at Noubarashen, a boarding school for delinquent boys 8-18 years old presenting \$100.00 to the boarding school to support their trade classes in tailoring along with bolts of fabric, needles and thread; sports equipment; school supplies, hygiene supplies, baseball caps, pens, paper, stuffed animals, and story books in Armenian and English, establishing a lending library at the facility.

About the Exchange Program

The Program, called "Secondary School Partnership," is sponsored by the Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association, Inc. with funding support from the Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs of the U.S. Department of State. The goal of the program is to partner two local schools, Arlington High School and Belmont High School with schools in Yerevan, Armenia. Each school hosted five students from Yerevan in the winter of 2002. Students from their schools made a reciprocal visit to Yerevan in the summer of 2004. The theme of the program is "Building A Civil Society", and is focused on advancing mutual understanding between our local community and Armenia and developing sustainable institutional linkages that serve the needs and interests of the students, schools and their communities. The groups include a chaperone and educators, whose program is to study education methodology. Participating students and educators establish long-term activities and joint projects between the host and guest students. They also engage in local community service projects.

Students and educators interested in the 2005 Outbound trip to Yerevan should send a self-addressed envelope and e-mail address to:
CYSCA, PO Box 382591, Cambridge, MA 02238
by December 1, 2004
cyscaschools@hotmail.com

Continued on page 14

About CYSCA

The Cambridge-Yerevan Sister City Association (CYSCA) was formed by a group of concerned citizens of Cambridge, MA who believed that a partnership with a Soviet city would promote world peace. They understood that people can build bridges for friendship, goodwill and cooperation that some times governments cannot. In 1986, Cambridge City Councilor Frank Duehay led a mission of eleven Cambridge citizens to Yerevan, Armenia, to present a proposal for what became a sister city partnership the following year. CYSCA was incorporated in 1987 as a nonprofit organization, under section 501(C)(3) of the Internal Revenue code.

In the 17 years which have followed, many activities have taken place, including citizens' exchanges in the fields of education, economics, environment, music, arts, culture, medicine, school aid, youth exchanges and humanitarian aid.

Committee Members 2003-2004

Our appreciation to the committee members who worked tirelessly to make this program a success. They include:

CYSCA President: Suzanne Pearce

Program Advisor: Jack Medzorian

Project Manager: Rev. Joanne Hartunian

Principal AHS: Stephen Woodcock

Principal School 190: Mrs. Karine Zatikyan

Principal BHS: Foster Wright

Principal School 65: Dr. Norayr Khrimyan

Project Administrator: Elizabeth Gallaher

Administrative Assistants: Lois Malconian and Ronald Malconian

CYSCA Education Committee: Tad Sudnick, Peggy Hovanessian, Suzanne Pearce

Treasurer: Philip Ketchian

Bookkeeper: Seta Sullivan

Host Family Coordinator: Peggy Hovanissian

Luggage Haul: Jirair Babikyan, Richard Boyajian, Saro Khachikian, Linda Deranian, Christopher Dewart, Elizabeth Gallaher

Yerevan Transportation Coordinator: Karine Apgaryan

YCSCA Yerevan Coordinators:

Yuri Jilavyan and Anna Karakhanyan

Exchange Physician: Dr. Mark Kalenian

Educational Consultants: Nancy Aykanian, Luke Bruffee, Andrew Crowe, Elizabeth Grady, Elizabeth Gulezian, Nancy Kalajian, Cheryl Shushan, Tad Sudnick, Diane Spera, Alison Thalmann

Internet coordinator: Anna Karakhanyan

Graphics Consultant: David Deranian

Graphics Assistant: Anna Karakhanyan

Editors: Bethel Charkoudian, Randy Cabell

Travel Consultant: Venera at Village Travel

Student Teacher: Amalik Vardanyan

Our Exchange Participants

Caroline Smart is a junior at Belmont High School. She has been a member of Belmont High School's Mock Trial Team since her freshman year and currently volunteers as co-coach of the Chenery Middle School team, working with Belmont and METCO students. Caroline is a devoted member of Zenith, her school's literary and art magazine. She was the Literary Editor her sophomore year and currently is Editor-in-Chief and the Editor of "The Belmont Book Review", a new school publication of student-written book reviews. She is captain-elect of the Belmont Girls' Varsity Swim Team, the defending Middlesex League Champions and Middlesex League Champions. Over the past two summers, Caroline has volunteered in market research and events planning at the Gore Place Society, in Waltham; and at Harvard's Program for Information Resources Policy, in Cambridge; and is a two time recipient of the President's Student Service Award for volunteerism in the community. Last year, her historical research on the Kindertransport, a train which transported Jewish children to safety during the Holocaust, earned her a finalist at the Massachusetts State Division of the National History Day competition and the recipient of the National Archives Award for Best Use of Primary Sources. She is one of Belmont High School's Student Representatives to the School Committee, secretary of the Belmont High School Student Senate, a "BHS Connector" which helps acclimatize incoming freshmen to the school, and a member of the Honors Chorus and Women's Choir at the school. A named National Honor Society student, she has been on Belmont High School's High Honor Roll successively since a Freshman. Caroline is passionate student of the humanities; and is an avid student of English, history, and Latin. She is an ardent Anglophile who, after her visit to Britain last summer, would like to study in England her junior year of college. Caroline eagerly anticipates participation in the Exchange this summer and looks forward to reconnecting with her Armenian host sister, Lilit Baghdasaryan.



Gina Sullivan, a 16-year-old, eleventh grader at Arlington High School is very energetic, friendly; and enjoys swimming, volleyball and pottery. She is a member of the Arlington High School Volleyball Team, the Arlington High School Chorus, St. James Children's Choir, and is an award winning piano player. Gina takes voice lessons and speaks Spanish and Armenian. She has a very creative talent in pottery and is the teacher's assistant in school.

One of her creations was selected to be displayed in an art show in Lexington, MA. She volunteers as a teacher's helper at Sahag Mesrob Armenian School. Her dream is to become a teacher and in particular she wishes to live in Armenia and help the students improve their English language. A world traveler, she has visited France, Italy, England, and Lebanon. Her greatest quality is her love for people in general, and children in particular, and she is an animal rights activist. Gina walked over 20 miles raising \$250.00 to benefit an exchange family in Armenia whose father recently died. Her mother is a CYSCA Board member, her father is an active CYSCA host family volunteer and her sister is a former exchange participant and a CYSCA Youth Program volunteer. Gina returns this year to Armenia as an Arlington High School volunteer and communicates with her sister school friends via e-mail. She is presently working in collaboration with her host sister on a joint project which they will implement in a village school in Armenia.



Our Exchange Participants

Julian Chippendale, a 17 year-old eleventh grader at Cambridge Rindge And Latin High School, is an enthusiastic human rights activist with a passion for art and good food. He was classically trained on the violin for ten years, which was later followed by electric bass and guitar. He played soccer for eleven years and joined the wrestling team his freshman year of high school. He is a member of the Peace and Justice Corps in Cambridge, an awareness group in which issues regarding cultural differences are discussed. At school, he is a member of the STARs Program (Students Teaching and Advocating Respect) in which he teaches elementary and high school aged students about social issues that affect them. In Boston, he helped fundraise and teach inner-city kids to snowboard in the Y.E.S. program (Youth Enrichment Services). He worked for the Cambridge Mayor's Youth Program restoring public artwork over the summer. Julian currently works at a local market as a stock employee, a cashier, and a deliveryman bringing food to elderly and disabled citizens in the area. He is the oldest of three brothers. With friends, he has made numerous video and animation projects, one of which won a Boston Globe Scholastic Award this winter. He has taken three years of college art and figure drawing courses. He is pursuing a film career, and hopes to travel the world, documenting social conflicts in an effort to help mend them.



Robert Hogle was born on April 1st, 1987 and is a volunteer in this years program. He has played the trumpet since fourth grade and is a member of the school band with superior medals in his solo ensemble competitions. He is a member of the audition Treasure Coast Youth Symphony Orchestra and performs for charities in his community. He enjoys soccer, baseball, roller hockey, football, and weight training and basketball. An avid Red Sox Fan, he collects Pedro Martinez memorabilia. He has participated in builders club, student council and is a member of the National Junior Honor Society. He is very involved in Mu Alpha Theta, a math club, and was elected historian in his junior year, and earned a fifth place on one of the math competitions. He participated in Model UN his freshman and sophomore years; and earned an award for excellence in the French Congress in Orlando for French conversation. He has earned bronze and silver medals for community service and physical fitness and is a volunteer at the Florida Oceanographic Society, Habitat for Humanity, and Pals in Partnership, which assists learning disabled students with note taking. He is looking forward to this opportunity to experience life in another country and to develop long lasting ties with students he meets in the school partnership program. He is one of two children and lives with his parents and pet dog.



Nicholas Sahagian is an honor roll student, just completing his freshman year at Belmont High School. He began skiing just three years ago and is now a member of the school's downhill racing ski team. He recently began fencing; he hopes to compete in local tournaments and plans to start a fencing club at his high school next year. Nicholas has a strong interest in music, especially rock, and is currently learning how to play guitar. He plays saxophone in the Belmont High School band, and in April 2004, he won an award for Outstanding Soloist at a High School Music Festival in Virginia Beach, VA. He attends Sunday School at Holy Trinity Armenian Church in Cambridge.

Nicholas is fortunate to have many of his family members living nearby. His parents both work in the medical field: his father, Peter, works as a Director of Regulatory Affairs at a biotech company and his mother, Christine, is a Project Director, managing various clinical research studies. This might be why Nicholas is thinking about a career in medicine, possibly specializing in psychiatry. Nicholas has a sister, Alyssa, who is 13; Alyssa can't wait until she has an opportunity to visit Armenia. Nicholas is the oldest of his many cousins on both sides of the family; this may be why Nicholas gets along so well with young children. Last summer, Nicholas was a counselor in training at a local day camp and next summer, he hopes to be a counselor there. In his free time, Nicholas likes to spend time with his friends, telling jokes, playing cards and video games. He is also an avid reader, mostly reading fantasy and science fiction.

Nicholas is excited about the opportunity to visit Armenia, meet new people, and explore another culture and society.



First Impressions of Armenia

by Alexandra Carver

My first thoughts as we walked through the airport in Yerevan were not positive. I couldn't help but notice how many people smoked, how clogged the air was with it even outside, and the luggage took forever. But then I stepped out of the airport, and I was nearly knocked over with a hug by Tamara, the Armenian girl who'd stayed at my house. She was closely followed by my homestay sister, Nellie Isakhanyan. There were crowds of Armenians all around us, hugging and introducing themselves. They seemed very happy to have us here, and while at first I had been very worried I realized, or hoped I realized, that they just wanted to get to know us and weren't going to judge us. Nellie and I clicked right away. All the Armenians seemed very friendly and happy. As we drove in the bus through Yerevan I did notice the slightly tired buildings around us and the abandoned cars, but the country was less commercialized than I had expected. Nellie's home was tiny but very cozy, and inviting. Armenians also seem very positive about everything! They're much more open and warm and welcoming than Americans. On the street, Americans often walk around with a "I'll sue you if you come near me" manner, but the Armenians were hugging us and talking to us and very excited to see us even though we'd just met. The culture seems much less harsh than Americans'. The people we saw on the streets, although we didn't talk to them, seemed more friendly as well, just in their manner. When we visited villages, the families were always happy to see us, glad to give us lunch or dinner, and we gave their children beanie babies and stuffed animals. Armenians also love to dance! It's amazing to me how easy it is for them, and how encouraging they are to us (the Americans all look like we have two left feet), even though we don't know what we're doing. They're eager to show us their culture and learn about us; I can tell I'm going to have a great time here.



Alexandra Carver is a 14 year-old ninth grader at Arlington High School. As a freshman, she participated on the wrestling, Ultimate Frisbee, and volleyball teams at AHS and takes Spanish at school. She has played the piano for eight years, and sings in the newly created youth choir at Park Avenue Congregational Church, where she will be confirmed this spring. Her hobbies include acting, writing, and astronomy, which she finds very interesting partly because of the universe's vastness and the way light travels in it. For many years, she has been stargazing with her dad, whenever there is time on clear nights. Alexandra is the co-author of a fantasy novel currently titled "Twin Prophecy," which she and the friend she is writing with hope to someday publish. She also hopes to explore a career as an author, coach, or teacher. She loves all animals (aside from mosquitoes), art, reading, and traveling. Her younger sister, Julia, 12, is in sixth grade; her father is the author of 14 science fiction/fantasy novels, and her mother is an editor for Concord Consortium. They have two dogs, Sam and Hermione, and one cat, Moonlight.



Gisella (Elly) Dewan was born in the Andean village of Omate, Peru on November 20, 1987. She immigrated to the US and settled in Arlington, Massachusetts in 1989 with her older brother, former CYSCA ambassador, Frederick. Elly has been host sister for two Armenian exchange students and is looking forward to reconnecting with them during her exchange.



Elly is a junior at Arlington High School where her favorite subjects are History and Chemistry. She was awarded the 11th grade Mathematics award for effort and Achievement in 2004. She is a four season athlete inside and outside of school. As an avid soccer player, she is a member of a club team, indoor team, Summer District Select team and

Arlington HS. She was captain of the JV high school team and was awarded the Unsung Hero Award by her coach at the end of the season for her contributions on and off the field. In winter Elly plays ice hockey for Arlington where she is a skilled defenseman (woman). She has also been recognized for age group accomplishments in local road races and enjoys snowboarding in winter.

Elly has an eye for design that is evident in her efforts in interior decorating and fashion design. She has organized and executed redecorating schemes, including painting, window treatments, furnishings and wall murals for her own and her mother's bedrooms. She meticulously organizes mementos for each year of school into scrap books which are favorites with her friends and their families. In school she is also is a member of Students against Drunk Driving, the Volunteer Club, and was elected class representative to student government.

Elly enjoys travel and has recently visited South America, England and Ireland. She possesses great stamina and at thirteen hiked the breathtaking Inca Trail to Machu Picchu, Peru. Last summer, with her family, she walked the Coast to Coast trail across England, over 300 Kilometers, and enjoyed many adventures with those she met along the way.

Elly's plans for the future include looking forward to her senior year at Arlington High School, college and travel. Besides sports her interests include the cinema, Lord of the Rings, caring for her dog (Barnaby) and her cat (ELY), and music. She lives in Arlington with her mother, Janet, a Nurse Anesthetist and Professor, and her older brother, Fred, a member of the 2001 CYSCA delegation.

Alex Deranian will be a junior at Belmont High School. His interests include art and music. He has recently been accepted into the advanced placement art program for his junior year. He plays bass guitar and saxophone. He is involved with a band that has performed for school dances and outdoor concerts. Last year Alex volunteered for Habitat for Humanity, and had the pleasure of traveling to California to build houses for the less fortunate. He enjoys socializing with friends and watching movies. He has two great brothers Anthony, now a freshman at The University of Massachusetts and a younger brother Adam who is in sixth grade at Chenery Middle School in Belmont. Alex's father is self employed as the president of Digital Arts and Sciences. His mother is a proud homemaker and artist.



First Impressions

by Nicholas Sahagian

I have adapted to Armenia in the first three days quicker than I have any other environment. The first day, I was too shy to make much more than small talk with my homestay sisters and I could barely communicate with my host parents. But, by the afternoon of my second day, I already loosened up to everyone and really felt like I was the same as them, we just happened to have separate cultures and languages. I quickly met, became friends, and learned about every individual in the group; I even am beginning to learn how to communicate well with my host parents, although translation is sometimes needed. The hospitality, generosity, and general kindness of the Armenian people is unrivaled with anything I have seen. I thought I would lose weight on this trip, but soon learned that is not likely to happen because my host family presents me with all kinds of foods in an effort to please me. And the food is delicious!

We have only been here for three days and I have already learned a lot from the Armenians about their culture, morals, and school systems. Although communism did not work properly as a way to run a society, I can see so many lasting effects of it that have touched me. In Armenia, everyone acts like the world is their best friend, and everyone is helping each other out. Nobody will let you do anything by yourself here, and you're not likely to find that in the United States. This program is vital because we are not just teaching about civil society, but also learning from the Armenians. The United States could use more generosity, kindness, and optimism and Armenia can definitely help us strengthen those virtues. I have had so much fun making friends with both Americans and Armenians. When I return home, I think I will have a smile on my face, a lot more knowledge about the world and how small it really is, and a new view of life.





Sarah Malconian is a twelfth grade honors student at Belmont High School. She has a father, mother, and twin brother and sister. This spring Sarah will be graduating not only from her high school, but also from her Armenian Sunday school (Holy Trinity Armenian Apostolic Church of Greater Boston). Sarah enjoys singing and theater, and plans to continue her education after high school at the University of New Hampshire majoring in business and economics. She is a member of the honors choir at Belmont High, and is also a leader in many community service clubs. Sarah hopes to have a career working with music industries all over the world, as well as managing upcoming talent in the music business. Sarah's love for music and for community service is one she wishes to pass on to others. Sarah has a warm heart and her charisma and friendliness is contagious.

Peter Gallaher is a 16 year-old who lives in Belmont. He will be entering his junior year at Belmont High School, where he is an honor roll student. Peter has been playing saxophone for about 5 years and is currently in the high school symphonic band. In April, the band played in Philadelphia, Washington, D.C., and Williamsburg, Va. Some things that he really enjoys are music and art, and he is also interested in film. He likes to hang out with friends and travel throughout Boston with them. Peter has traveled with his family to the four corners of the United States: Florida, Washington, California and Maine, along with trips to New Orleans and Las Vegas, and up and down the East Coast. He has a younger sister, Katie, who is entering the eighth grade. His parents, Libby and Jim, are both retired. His dad is an investor as well, and an avid bird watcher. His mom is almost a full time volunteer for several organizations. The family also has a dog, Titan, and a cat named Patches. Peter looks forward to going to Armenia so that he can see the world from a different perspective, and learn more about its people, history, culture and current events.



Sara Hartunian-Credit is a Junior at Belmont High School. Her interests include yoga, running, dancing, spending time with her friends and family, and listening to all kinds of music, especially since she grew up in a home where music was always playing, including classical, country, rock and rap. Sara is an outgoing and energetic person and loves to meet new people. She was co-captain of the Junior Varsity Field Hockey Team at Belmont High School in 2002. In 2003, she played Varsity Field Hockey at the High School and plans to continue with the varsity team as a Senior. Sara is also a Class Connector, orienting Freshman students to the High School. She participated in History Day 2003, creating a project on the Solidarity Movement in Poland. Her group moved on to the District Competition/ Senior Division and received honorable mention. Sara has an avid interest in environmental protection, and for the past three summers, she worked at the Habitat Environmental Day Camp in Belmont as a Leader-in-Training and as an Assistant Leader. She will be returning to the Camp in 2004 as an Assistant Leader. Sara also has a specialized interest in Ceramics and is presently in Advanced Ceramics at the high school. Sara's mother is a Social Worker, helping individuals and families at the Marblehead Counseling Center, and Sara's father is a health consultant, author, and professor, presently teaching wellness and fitness at Fitchburg State College. Sara's sister, Talyn, is an Honors Student at Rhode Island School of Design, majoring in painting.



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Christopher Albano will be a tenth grader at Belmont High School in the fall. He is member of the school ski team, is a soccer referee, enjoys playing soccer, tennis, and guitar, composing music, and reading. He was the secretary for the freshman class and was elected to serve as secretary again as a sophomore. His other leadership opportunities have included being an eighth grade buddy for a fifth class, a school adjustment tutor for a younger student, and a counselor-in-training for an inclusive co-ed day camp. An honors student, Chris is interested in pursuing a career in law or psychology. He is interested in these fields because he enjoys working with people and problem solving. While Chris's travels have been limited to the U.S., Canada and Ireland, he is looking forward to experiencing a culture in another part of the world. His father is a college professor in structural engineering, and his mother is an environmental engineer. The oldest of three children, Chris has a sister and a brother.



First Impressions

by Peter Gallaher



As I arrived in Yerevan, exhausted and eager to see my host sister, Sona, I looked around and realized where I actually was. After waiting for nearly two years, the wait was over; I was finally in Armenia. After getting our luggage and going through customs, I got to see Sona. Although we had not seen each other in 2 years, I felt like nothing had changed. As we traveled through Armenia I realized that this country was actually in better shape than I had been led to believe. The roads weren't in the best condition, but it was more modern than I had imagined. After being dropped off at the school, Sona and I walked to what would be my home for the next 3 weeks. As the building came into sight, I thought that these next 3 weeks would be tough. But as we entered her apartment, I realized that the outside of the buildings did not reflect the warmth and friendliness of the apartments. I was planning to go straight to bed, but my host family was there to greet me. All of the Armenians I had met so far are very kind, warm and hospitable. Although I had no idea at the time, it turned out that most people in this country were hospitable and kind. This was such a change from America, where everyone seems to keep to themselves and tries to avoid contact with strangers and foreigners. After I learned that water was not available 24 hours a day in the apartment, I was a little worried. But as I thought about it, I realized that it is not necessary at all. The home, in my perspective, was perfect. It had the perfect amount of room to live and everything necessary to survive. I realized that most of the things we think are "necessities" in America, are not necessary at all to survive. After settling into the apartment, I realized that these next 3 weeks would not be a struggle, but an enjoyable, fun experience that would hopefully change my life. After going on the trip, I look back and see that the trip was enjoyable, fun, and definitely did change my view of the world, made me realize how lucky I am as an American, and let me see the world from a different perspective.

First Impressions

by Sarah Malconian

This experience is one that has already begun to change me in the few short days that I have been here. Armenia has touched me beyond words. These warm people have welcomed me with more love than I would have ever experienced in America. When we were driving from the airport I looked out the bus window and was taken back by the unique beauty the lands of Armenia hold. I have traveled all over America and seen so many types of "beauty." Tropical islands, snowy winters, breathtaking canyons have all made my list of worldly wonders. Armenia is different, its beauty lies between the old meshing with the new. With its tired fields, speeding European cars, small stands, vast mountains, and developing buildings, Armenia symbolizes a country modernizing with democracy in mind. I haven't figured out what exactly mesmerizes my eyes out the window of the bus, but hopefully I will land my finger on that very quality and learn to appreciate it before I leave.

A part of me cannot help but feel connected to this country, these people. In the upcoming weeks I plan to explore the lives and the heritage of a culture and people that date back before the idea of free nation existed. The past two days we have been on a tight non-stop schedule but I would not have it any other way! Here's to a step in the right direction not only for the benefit of Armenia but for the beginning of my life.

Genocide Memorial

by Alexandra Carver

We visited the Genocide Memorial today. It was very sad, and moving. Inside of the circle of 12 pillars was a flame, that we were told is always burning. The flame was a symbol of all the people who had died in the Genocide, representing that those who were killed were not forgotten and would always live on in the hearts of other Armenians and be remembered. It was explained to us that the 12 pillars represented the Armenian states that were now under Turkey.

I thought about how much Armenians suffered, and I realized how amazing it is that they've managed to rebuild their lives and resettle in cities and villages after so many had been massacred and killed. It's no wonder they're such a positive culture; they're glad they have what they do and they really understand what it is to suffer. I felt unsettled when I thought about America and all the material things that we value.

Continued on page 7



Chris Lo is a sophomore at Belmont High who lives in Arlington. Chris, an avid soccer player, was on the BHS JV team and during the winter and spring plays for an Arlington club team. Chris studied Chinese for two years, French for seven years. He is a member of the Asian-American club at BHS. Outside of school, Chris has trained in Martial arts for five years and will soon earn his black belt level. In addition he is also the Senior Patrol Leader and life scout in Boy

scouts. Chris has traveled extensively in and out of the USA, including Scotland, England, Geneva, France, Canada, and the Republic of Kiribati. He attends First Church in Cambridge, Congregational where he has been confirmed in April of '04 and he is in the youth choir. His family consists of his mother, father, brother and sister and pets including two guinea pigs and a rabbit. His father teaches at Harvard Medical School, and School of Public Health. His mother is a veterinarian in private practice.

Benjamin Dewart is a 16 year-old sophomore at the Cambridge Rindge and Latin School. Benjamin has two brothers and two sisters who range in age from 8 to 22 years old. His father teaches furniture making at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and his mother teaches wood shop at a local private school. Benjamin enjoys studying politics and history. Economics is another one of his interests. He is in the Model United Nations, Students United for Global Action, and Amnesty International. He wants to be a diplomat. Benjamin has been taking French and Spanish for the last three to four years. For the last seven, he has played the saxophone. Jazz and Hip-hop are his favorite types of music. In Benjamin's house, there is a pet dog and cat.



Julia Dekermendjian is a sixteen year-old eleventh grader at Cambridge Rindge and Latin school. She is bilingual and can speak French as fluently as she can speak English. Julia is a world traveler and she has visited numerous countries including England, France, Italy, Mexico, and Canada. She enjoys science and even takes part in her school's science team. At this year's statewide Science Olympiad, Julia placed first in Experimental Design, one of her three events. Julia also enjoys and plays sports and she is currently a member of her

school's Varsity Volleyball and Lacrosse teams. In her spare time, she likes to have fun with friends and family and do volunteerism. She has been volunteering at a local homeless shelter for two years where she helps to prepare and serve food to the shelter's guests. Julia lives with her father who is a chemist, her mother who is a graphic designer, and her cat and dog.

OUR EXCHANGE VOLUNTEERS AND EDUCATORS

Cheryl Shushan, has taught in Belmont over ten years and is a Conflict Resolution Specialist. She was Belmont's 2002 Educator in Residence in Armenia and is returning again this year to follow up on her conflict resolution program and to meet with students and educators related to that program. A native of Concord, New Hampshire she lived in an extended family with her grandmother, mother, father, and younger brother. She attended Simmons College, Boston and worked for New England Telephone for seven years in a management position following graduation. Following her marriage to Don Shushan, then a second year medical student they had three children; Andrea and twin boys, Alexander and David. When her children were finishing elementary school she reentered college and graduated from Lesley College with a Master of Education degree. Her daughter, a Physician's Assistant, is married and has a 5 month old baby named Joshua. Her son Alex, will be starting his first year of residency in orthopedic surgery at Boston Medical Center this summer. Her son David is getting his MBA at Harvard. Cheryl is an active volunteer in the community and is presently on the Parents Committee at University of Massachusetts Medical School. She has many hobbies and looks for opportunities to learn, discover and do new things. "I enjoy my job, my friends, my family, and my life, and I feel thankful for the many blessings that have and still do fill my life. I have found my life rerouting itself many times over the years. I find that enriching and exciting. I hope for and look forward to taking more new roads in the years to come for I truly believe that life is an adventure. I am appreciative for this opportunity to visit Armenia, to teach workshops on nonviolent conflict resolution in our partner schools, to create new avenues of communication for the people of Armenia and to be on the ground floor in helping to create peaceable schools."



First Impressions

by Sarah Malconian

This experience is one that has already begun to change me in the few short days that I have been here. Armenia has touched me beyond words. These warm people have welcomed me with more love than I would have ever experienced in America. When we were driving from the airport I looked out the bus window and was taken back by the unique beauty the lands of Armenia hold. I have traveled all over America and seen so many types of "beauty." Tropical islands, snowy winters, breathtaking canyons have all made my list of worldly wonders. Armenia is different, its beauty lies between the old meshing with the new. With its tired fields, speeding European cars, small stands, vast mountains, and developing buildings, Armenia symbolizes a country modernizing with democracy in mind. I haven't figured out what exactly mesmerizes my eyes out the window of the bus, but hopefully I will land my finger on that very quality and learn to appreciate it before I leave.

A part of me cannot help but feel connected to this country, these people. In the upcoming weeks I plan to explore the lives and the heritage of a culture and people that date back before the idea of free nation existed. The past two days we have been on a tight non-stop schedule but I would not have it any other way! Here's to a step in the right direction not only for the benefit of Armenia but for the beginning of my life.

Genocide Memorial

by Alexandra Carver

We visited the Genocide Memorial today. It was very sad, and moving. Inside of the circle of 12 pillars was a flame, that we were told is always burning. The flame was a symbol of all the people who had died in the Genocide, representing that those who were killed were not forgotten and would always live on in the hearts of other Armenians and be remembered. It was explained to us that the 12 pillars represented the Armenian states that were now under Turkey.

I thought about how much Armenians suffered, and I realized how amazing it is that they've managed to rebuild their lives and resettle in cities and villages after so many had been massacred and killed. It's no wonder they're such a positive culture; they're glad they have what they do and they really understand what it is to suffer. I felt unsettled when I thought about America and all the material things that we value.

Continued on page 7



scouts. Chris has travel Geneva, France, Canada Cambridge, Congregation choir. His family consists guinea pigs and a rabbit Health. His mother is a

Benjamin Dewart is a Rindge and Latin School who range in age from making at the Massachusetts teaches wood shop at a in politics and history. is in the Model United Nations Amnesty International. Spanish for the last three Jazz and Hip-hop are his and cat.



school's Varsity Volleyball friends and family and later for two years where lives with her father who dog.

OUR EXCHANGE EDUCATORS

Cheryl Shushan, has Specialist. She was Belmont and is returning again to program and to meet with gram. A native of Concord family with her grandmother attended Simmons College Telephone for seven years ation. Following her medical student they have her children were finished Lesley College with a Master married and has a 5 month year of residency in Oregon David is getting his MBA, presently on the Parent has many hobbies and my job, my friends, my family and still do fill my life. I that enriching and exciting to come for I truly believe visit Armenia, to teach and create new avenues of floor in helping to create

THE ARMENIAN EXCHANGE

Many thanks to the host families in Armenia for opening their homes and hearts to host our American Team.

Family of Ani Arakelyan
Family of Lilit Baghdasaryan
Family of Arevik Bznuni
Family of Narine Chirkinian
Family of David Danielyan
Family of Lilit Eremyan
Family of Tamara Gevorgyan
Family of Tatevik Ghazaryan
Family of Anna Harutunyan
Family of Ani Hovannisyan
Family of Nelli Hovsepien
Family of Nelli Isakhanian
Family of Kristine Kamalian
Family of Anna Karakhanyan
Family of Norayr Karakhanyan
Family of Edgar Khachatryan
Family of Seda Manukyan
Family of Sona Nazaryan
Family of Victoria Ohanjanian
Family of Hrayr and Hayk Papikyan
Family of Zarine Tepelikyan
Family of Gayanne Vardanyan
Family of Arus Yeghoyan

Teachers: Karine Abgaryan, Irina Amiryman, An Barseghyan, Naira Danielyan, Zhenya Hayrapet Ruzanna Margaryan and Nelli Mkrtchyan.

Luggage Haul: Jirair Babikyan, Richard Boyajian, Khachikian, Linda Deranian, Christopher Dewart, Elizabeth Gallaher.

Alison Thalmann, was born in Montclair, New Jersey; a very diverse town twenty minutes outside New York City. She moved to Burlington, Vermont where she graduated from the University of Vermont (UVM) in 1999 with her B.A. in Sociology and her Masters in Education in 2001. While an undergraduate, Alison participated as a Big Sister to an underprivileged child who inspired her to work with children. She has taught in Belmont for two years as a Special Education teacher for ninth and tenth graders, and is currently a dorm parent at a progressive high school in Weston, Massachusetts at The Cambridge School of Weston. She joined the special education/teaching field because she respects the value of the individual. It is important to Alison that all students have access to a good education and a place where they feel valued. We all have strengths and challenges; however, too often than not strengths go unrecognized both by others but also by ourselves. It can be very disheartening, as a teacher, to watch a student give up on themselves. On a larger scale, it is also happening throughout our society. We all can make a difference in the world. Alison quoted Nelson Mandela saying, "Our deepest fear is not that we are inadequate. Our deepest fear is that we are powerful beyond measure. It is our light, not our darkness, that most frightens us." It is important to instill in all young people the powerful feeling that they can make a difference. CYSCA provides the opportunity for young people to comprehend the meaning of active citizenship and learn the skills and knowledge needed to make a difference. The goal of education is to learn with and from each other. As we recognize our own strengths and weaknesses, we recognize that we can contribute our talents as well as accept the help of others. Cooperative learning can provide a network of supports in order to promote learning. The theme for Alison's work while in Armenia will be building bridges; the ways we are interdependent on one another and the benefits we gain from learning to work together. Alison recognizes the power of people working together to overcome difficulties and achieve common goals in creative ways. Alison feels very fortunate for the education and resources she has been provided with and, as a teacher of students struggling in school, has many experiences and strategies to share with Armenian educators.

Travel provides one of the greatest avenues to learning and understanding. By traveling to a far off place, you gain a new perspective; one that you cannot always get from a textbook. Alison's inspiration to travel came from an exchange she participated in to London, England while a tenth grader in high school. After more than ten years, her friendship with her host family is still going strong. Alison has welcomed many opportunities to learn about new cultures through her travel adventures. Her study abroad experience led her to Queensland, Australia and various excursions to Tasmania, Alice Springs, the Great Barrier Reef, New Zealand, and Fiji. Alison has also traveled to France, Switzerland, Germany, Austria, Holland, Italy, Spain, Portugal, Hungary, Czech Slovakia, Peru, Hong Kong, China, and Vietnam. Through all her journeys, both abroad and at home, Alison believes that kindness and compassion can make a difference in peoples' lives and in the world at large. She believes that kindness and compassion, like reading and writing, are learned skills. If we are going to live in a more global world where there is peace and compassion, there needs to be openness to ideas and tolerance, which, like reading and writing, can be taught purposively. It is Alison's hope to carry on the teachings of openness and tolerance, as she has done for students with learning disabilities, to Armenia in order to promote cooperative learning, democracy and world peace.



Nancy Aykanian was born in Framingham, Massachusetts. She received her B.A. in French and Ancient Greek from Wellesley College, and did graduate work in French Language and Literature at UC Berkeley. She taught first and second year French at Wellesley College for two and a half years, and directed the College's junior year abroad program in Aix-en-Provence, France from 1999-2001. Upon her return from France, Nancy taught French at UMass, Boston and worked as a freelance tutor and translator. This past spring, she was hired as a

long-term sub in the Foreign Languages Department at Belmont High School. She will be teaching 3rd, 4th, and 5th year French there full time in the fall. Nancy's interests include music, literature, and film, and she is passionate about social justice and progressive politics. Nancy is looking forward to teaching her class on "Democracy Building" in Armenia, where she hopes to examine with her students the ideals of Jeffersonian Republicanism relative to Democracy in America and Armenia in 2004.



Genocide Memorial

by Alexandra Carver
(from page 6)

Our society is not as loving of its people, and while we prize cars and money, Armenians take pride in their lives and cherish their blessings. Americans can be so clouded sometimes. We must seem very naive. One thing I hadn't realized was how much of Armenia, Turkey now has under its control; the mention of 12 captured states surprised me a little.

The pointed monument outside the fire memorial was split unevenly in one place. The black split was the Genocide, and the smaller triangular part symbolized the past and the pain that they had suffered, and the tall, larger part was the future, growing upward toward good. It was very nice symbolism and made me think, that should go for everyone, that even if you suffer and have trouble in life or experience pain, you can keep growing and there's always a bright side.



Journal Entry

by Julia Dekermendjian

Sitting here, on my last night, staring at my packed belongings, I cannot believe how quickly this trip has come to an end. This has been a tremendous experience for me. Noubarashen, the many churches, Sissian, the dinners, and the people are just a few of the things that made this trip such an exquisite one and they are also what make Armenia such a unique place. Everything held its own value to me, and leaving Armenia feels like I should be leaving everything behind--my friends, my new family, and my experiences. It's not unusual that I wish that I could stay longer. I've decided, though, that my departure does not have to be a sad one, it doesn't have to mean that I'm leaving it all behind. It doesn't have to be a stereotypical goodbye. I'm taking what I learned--that people in even the most destitute conditions can still give so much, and I will use this as my own inspiration for my future pursuits. Having spent three weeks in a place where greed is overshadowed by genuine people, gratitude, love, humor, and good will, has taught me that the most important things in life are not directly correlated to wealth and materialistic possessions, as many people confuse them to be.



Mark H. Kalenian, M.D., is a board certified Allergy/Immunology specialist at Alabama Asthma & Allergy Clinic in Dothan, Alabama. He is formerly of Philadelphia, Pennsylvania. Dr. Kalenian's 2001 CYSCA summer project in Yerevan addressed the problem of micronutrient deficiency, a global problem affecting at least 2 billion people. At least twenty-five percent of all Armenians in Armenia do not get enough to eat, and likely are at risk for iron, iodine and other deficiencies. Dr.

Kalenian's own great-grandmother from Kharpert was a victim of starvation following the Armenian genocide earlier this century. Dr. Kalenian provided the group with several hours of instruction in micronutrients, and also donated medical equipment/supplies and offered his medical services as required. He is a graduate of Hahnemann University where he completed medical school in 1985 and a residency in Internal Medicine in 1988. He spent four years as an Army physician from 1988-92 and spent three months in Saudi Arabia in "Desert Storm". He was awarded two service medals. Dr. Kalenian's father, Clarence Kalenian, is currently living in Philadelphia and is listed in the Armenian-American Who's Who of Outstanding Athletes for his winning the US Amateur Chess Championship in 1971. Dr. Kalenian's late mother was an award-winning music teacher. Dr. Kalenian's hobbies include photography, amateur radio, and playing violin in a local amateur orchestra. He is the current president of the Southeast Alabama Photography & Adventure Club, which he founded in September 1998. Mark has been involved with Camp Wheeze-away, a summer asthma camp for children in central Alabama, and also is a coinstructor in Troy State University's Summer Photo Institute. He is current Vice-President of the Alabama State Allergy Society and will be President in one year. He returns once again to his "homeland" this summer and is eager to be of service.



CYSCA extends its heartfelt gratitude to the countless volunteers, school staff and facilities and other organizations that contributed generously to this youth exchange with financial contributions and personal services both in the USA and in Armenia. Special thanks to the USA and Armenian host families who opened up not only their homes but their hearts as well to their guests.

Missing Armenia

by Alec Kherlopian



A week has gone by and I feel different. I asked myself how I changed, and I realized it was because of Armenia; I was missing Armenia. I missed the many aspects of Armenia. An example is the warm welcoming lifestyle. Every morning my host-mother would wake me up and she would ask me what I was wearing. The first day I was confused why she wanted to know the clothes I was wearing. But when she knew my outfit for the day, she took it and ironed it. I was surprised and impressed. However, the greatest feeling I had was the warmth in my heart. I felt very loved and in a sense I felt like some royalty. I would be woken up with many dishes of foods all across the kitchen table. It was overwhelming, but delicious. My host-mother kept on telling me that I needed to eat a lot so that when I came home my mother wouldn't think that they kept me hungry in Armenia. I not only miss the warm comfort from my host-family, but I also miss the people. I have not met such a nice group of people in my life. They were so nice that I felt like a brother to all of the girls. They would take care of me, telling me to fix my hair or tell me what to wear. They would always tell me that they would take care of me if other local guys were bothering me. However, that was surprising because usually the girls get the guys to beat up the boys; in this case the girls felt strong enough to overpower the boys. Fortunately, I did not experience any bullies. Lastly, I missed the lifestyle of the country. Although the lifestyle was hard to adapt to, it was hard to forget. The reason why I miss it is because it is very different from the lifestyle in America, where everything is modernized to be easy for you. The different ways of going to the bathroom, the different showers, and the foods all contributed to a unique lifestyle that I could not forget. Although most people won't miss that lifestyle of Armenia, I will, because it is very unique and enjoyable. Overall, life in Armenia changed me into seeing different views around the world, and I miss it.

PROJECT DIRECTOR



Rev. Joanne Gulezian Hartunian, holds a Massachusetts teaching certification for secondary education and a certification for principalship of secondary schools. Ordained in 1974 by the United Church of Christ, and a graduate of Suffolk University and Andover Newton Theological School, she is experienced with youth in programs in Armenia, Mexico, Arizona, New York, and Massachusetts. Program Manager and chaperone for CYSCA's Secondary School

Partnerships Promoting Civil Society project, she has written grants and developed the curriculum for this exchange according to the guidelines established by Congress and set forth by US Department of State, Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs. This is her eighth trip to Armenia. She states, "Being able to be at the forefront of democratic education in Armenia is exciting. Being involved with CYSCA exchanges since 1994, it is gratifying to see first hand the impact our programs have had on some of the participants in USA and Armenia. In the USA, our students became more globally aware and socially conscious. Armenian students in our program have impacted their country in various leadership positions, for example, 1994 graduates, Vigen Sargysan, formerly Secretary to Minister of Defense, Republic Armenia and presently an advisor to the President of Armenia; Esther Demerchian, World Bank, Yerevan; and 1995 Graduates, Lilit Voskanyan, US Embassy in Yerevan and Astghine Pasoyan, Project Director USAID. CYSCA graduates of our program in Yerevan have founded volunteer organizations in Yerevan to assist orphanages and children at risk. Their greatest accomplishment has been to register children at the Nor Kharpet Orphanage in Special Olympics. Students received special certificates of merit from the US State Department in their effort to promote civil society and volunteerism. Our educator program strengthens teacher skills to identify multiple intelligences, thereby utilizing all of Armenia's future brain power. Armenia is not a country to be examined, but to be explored with its limitless possibilities and the greatest of all resources, its people. Armenia does not need to be taught how to fish; it needs to be pointed in the direction of the best catch. And I believe our program has done that."

In conclusion she adds, "Civil Society is the necessary framework through which a group of people function harmoniously to allow the majority within the society to prescribe policies while protecting the fundamental human rights of every citizen. Being part of the education; value clarification, citizenship, career and character development of students in both USA and Armenia is an honor and responsibility I accept with pleasure in my commitment to human rights and civil liberties. I look forward to a continued relationship with YCSCA and CYSCA as we work together on programs which help our citizens speak with one another and share common concerns and ideas." She has been married to physicist and computer software developer Dr. Nelson Hartunian for 34 years and is the mother of three grown children and the daughter of Kirk and Elizabeth Gulezian of Watertown, MA.



Excerpt from Journal entry

by Nicholas Sahagian

After a quiet and relaxing day, the evening had quite a surprise in store for us. The schedule that day had nothing written past seven, and we were all wondering if we were just going to go home early that day. Joanne told us we were going to go to a physics lecture and my heart sank, but then Amalik secretly told me we were going to an Armenian amusement park called "Victory Park" All the Armenians looked very excited, and the Americans very confused. Amalik explained that this park was like "the Armenian Disney World" and everyone loves this place. I got very excited when she told me this because I love roller coasters. We walked towards the park, and were greeted with a giant statue. We all talked for a while as Joanne got everything ready. Then, with everyone excited, we entered the park. Expecting tons of fun roller coasters, all there was were a few carnival rides and game booths. Nevertheless, I had tons of fun. The rides were boring, but the Armenians were screaming and laughing, I tried to do a shooting game, but couldn't even figure out how to load the gun, we even found some new rides I had never seen before. Watching the Armenian kids, I realized that we as Americans need so much to be satisfied, but to the Armenians, a few rides and games give them heaven. After a night of fun, excitement, and Ping-Pong, we all went home, dead tired and very happy. It's amazing how much more fun things can be when you're with a group of kids who appreciate it so much more than you do.

Women and Physical Activity in Armenia

by Elly Dewan

I play several sports and I like to be active so I was interested to know why the Armenian boys who we have met as exchange students play sports and the girls don't. Just about all the girls I know in America play an organized sport, such as soccer, hockey, or lacrosse. So I wondered why the girls in Armenia don't seem to be involved with them. Was it that they were not interested, or, was there no opportunity, or, was it just not part of their culture? I thought that maybe in their culture the girls should stay home and learn to cook and clean and take care of the family and were not aloud to go outside and play sports. In school 65 in the middle of all the apartments there was a soccer field made of cement.

Continued on page 10

Women and Physical Activity in Armenia

(continued from page 9)

Whenever we walked by there would be no girls playing on it, only boys.

In Yerevan I spoke to some of the students and asked them a few questions about sports. The majority of the girls did not play sports, but, I interviewed one girl, named Arevik Bznuni, who did play basketball and volleyball. She said that when playing the sport the kids play fair and everyone abides by the rules and there is a referee who enforces the rules, and, that they can't be changed. The rules are the same as they are in America. They wear a red and white uniform. I asked her if she wore any protection, and she said she wore elbow pads for volleyball. She said she loves to watch pro basketball games and she loves the NBA. Her favorite team is the San Antonio Spurs. She said sports were offered at her school such as basketball, running, volleyball and soccer. Also she said that she wishes to play more sports like tennis and swimming. There are separate teams for boys and girls and the rules for each gender are the same. She said that both the boys and girls abide by the rules. She was the only girl I spoke with who seemed interested in sports.



It seemed like most of the girls never think about playing on an actual sports team just because it isn't part of the culture. I noticed when we went to the boys' orphanage and held a soccer game many of the Armenian girls didn't play in the soccer game. I didn't know if it was because they felt that it was inappropriate to be a girl and play such a physical sport or it was because they were not fit enough to play. But being fit is not the problem because I noticed that most of the girls seemed very physically fit, just as physically fit as my friends who play soccer, hockey or run track here.

Gradually, during my three weeks in Armenia I did notice that they just live a much more active lifestyle than we do, so, they get physical activity without playing organized sports. Sure I play on a soccer team, but I get a ride to the field and a ride to school, and, any building over three stories has an elevator. In Armenia the people walk most places and use the stairs. On the day I arrived my host mother picked up my very heavy suitcase and carried it up 5 flights of stairs without getting out of breath. Still, just walking to school and up the stairs couldn't possibly keep the Armenian girls in such good condition.

But the Armenian girls do one thing very well that requires a lot of physical exertion. In Armenia we went dancing practically every night. I know all the Armenian kids must dance an awful lot because they were all so good at it, and no matter how much I imitated them I found it impossible to coordinate. I got a little better at the dancing by the end of our three weeks, but it would take a lot more practice for me to keep up with my host sister, Anna, and her friends.

Although I loved the dancing, I was still a little disappointed that I really couldn't find any organized competitive athletic games that I could watch. In the town I live, if you're driving by a field, usually

there is a game going on with boys and girls playing soccer, baseball, softball or lacrosse, but, I didn't even see a field set up for a sport to be played on it in Armenia. We would pass by all these open fields and I would think, "That would be great place for a soccer field". I know if the Armenian girls did play they would learn about competition and recovering from a loss to play again. I also felt that the opportunities for girls are just not equal. I think that all the girls should go out and do a sport not only a few. Arevik does it with her school and I think if more kids joined her then it would soon become normal for every girl to be on a sports team, like in America. Dancing and walking are keeping them in shape much more effectively than the inactive American life could, but I know some of those girls would be awesome soccer players if they had the chance. Besides having fun they would learn a lot about competition, and winning and losing, if the opportunity was available to them.

During the three weeks in Armenia, when we would be hanging around waiting for the bus or just relaxing, American kids would start a game of soccer or Frisbee and the Armenian kids would join, eventually, even the girls. Once they got involved they enjoyed it and were good at it. It's not that they are not capable of playing or that they don't want to play, it's just that they don't have the opportunity to play. It will take more girls like Arevik to gradually change things so that in the future girls will have more athletic opportunities.

"Welcome!" - All Armenians

by Chris Albano

This place is phenomenal. I can't believe that I get to live here for three entire weeks. Honestly, it is a blessing. Thus far, my only complaint is that the architecture isn't quite as pleasing to the eye as that in Vienna, but that matters very little at this point. There is so much culture imbedded in this society. I can sense it. It radiates openly from the warmth and kindness of those native to the area. Our flight in was fine, and when I stepped out of that small concrete airport, I was completely revved on an energy that comes from staying up for too long, to the point where you cannot sleep. I met Arevik, and she's totally awesome. I sleep in her room and in some respects it is like mine. Both of our rooms are very small, so in that respect they are similar. I must say, though, that Armenians are far better off than I had originally imagined. I had expected dry, dry deserts, stretching on for miles, with people living in constant starvation and poverty. This is most definitely not the case. The English spoken here is great; though I would much rather eavesdrop on some Armenian. It is much more pleasing for the ears. After I had been given the grand tour, I was offered some food, which mainly consisted of bread and cucumbers (best cucumbers ever). This segwayed into sleep, and Arevik went to her lessons. Upon her return, she woke me, and we drew. This would not be too significant except for the fact that I hate doing art. It always feels rushed, and it never comes out right. However, while I was doing this, I did not feel rushed, and it came out fine. I began to wonder that if this country could make me relearn the art of enjoying art, what else could it do? We then had some spaghetti (so good), rolls, and cabbage salad. Twas grand. We then boarded the bus and rolled down to 65. Orientation/ wild dance party followed. They were great, and I actually got dancing. I found it to be highly therapeutic. For future reference: Dancing is relaxing. People anxiety is dumb. After the orientation, I went home, and took a chop chop. It was great, but I took absolutely forever. I then slept. When I look at the culture surrounding me, I see an obviously traumatized history. The economy is down, people are suffering, and the recovery is barely on the rise. I am not sure why, then, the culture seemed to be a pinch of all of my experiences thrown together in a melding pot, and then served onto a plate. Take a dash of Kilarney, Adare, New Mexico, Big Sur, Colorado, and Native American Pueblos, and you have something very similar to Armenia. Granted, it is true that we are all unique on some levels, but this really shows how similar we all are. I think that perhaps had people in the past had a similar revelation that we are all the same, many atrocities could have been avoided, and many lives could have been saved, especially in Armenia.

Armenia's Progress

by Benjamin Dewart

My questions were about problems Armenia faces and their possible solutions. I focused on democracy when studying this topic. We had the opportunity to meet Vigen Sargsyan, former 1994 CYSCA participant, presently Assistant to the President of Armenia and formerly Secretary of Armenia's Minister of Defense who met with Donald Rumsfeld last year in Washington and is a graduate of Tufts School of International Law and Diplomacy; Aghasse Enokyan, Political Science Professor at Yerevan State University, also a graduate of CYSCA's Community Connections Program, and who will be attending the Kennedy School at Harvard University this year; representatives at the Yerevan offices of the US Embassy, Peace Corps and United Nations. The problems Armenia has relate largely to the conflict in Karabakh and the transition toward capitalism. A major source of these problems is also a lack of trust and legitimacy in the government. These problems are both economic and political. They exist in most sectors of Armenian life and affect virtually all Armenians.

Armenia has many economic problems which relate to the absence of good geographical trade partners. Nagorno Karabakh is the disputed region between Armenia and Azerbaijan which began the war between those nations. This conflict has lead to economic sanctions between the two parties. Moreover, Turkey, a nation which shares an ethnic and religious identity with Azerbaijan, decided to impose its own economic sanctions on Armenia. Georgia is very unstable due to the Rose Revolution and other political tension. Finally, there is an American trade law will put a U.S. trade embargo on Armenia if it exceeds a set amount of trade with Iran. This means that it must sacrifice some trade with Iran in order to keep trade with the U.S. What Armenia is left with is limited commerce with its neighbors.

Another economic concern of Armenia is a lack of economic diversity or amplitude. The Soviet Union had a policy of forcing the Soviet states to depend on each other economically to create greater political bonds. This policy was carried out by placing whole industries in one state so that other states would need that state's product or service. The results once the Soviet Union collapsed: there was great need for commodities which nations had very little access to. Armenia needs many goods which its own economy lacks. It has many professionals who are well educated but have no place to work. According to Mr. Kim Hargan, Program Affairs Officer at the US Embassy, Armenia has the highest literacy rate in the world. Even if the economy were more diverse, it lacks volume needed for self-sufficiency. These factors cause massive unemployment and poverty. Outside of Yerevan, these problems are more severe because of the isolated nature of rural Armenia.

While Armenia seems to be stuck in a very difficult place economically, the situation is not all bad. Armenia has had large economic growth building it toward levels reached under Soviet times. There has been foreign help given to Armenia in different forms. Foreign governments, especially the U.S., have given millions of dollars to Armenia. Private citizens have also sent millions of dollars to solve Armenia's economic problems. While this aid is not permanent, it is responsible for a lot of progress made over the last fifteen years. The economic state of Armenia relates heavily to its political state. Widespread poverty can lead to corruption. The new government lacks trust and legitimacy from the people of Armenia.



This can deter business and investment. These problems largely stem from the conflict in Nagorno Karabakh and the long history of Soviet governance.

Many Armenians have a lack of trust in their government and its authorities. Police are most visible in Yerevan collecting bribes from drivers who they stop. Furthermore, the police are often seen as the hand of the corrupt government because Armenia only has a national police force. Armenia's war has given power to the military because Armenians feel dependent on it. Accordingly, Armenia's military gets one of the largest portions of its country's GDP in the world. The civilian government also loses legitimacy because of the military's presence. The government is seen as weaker because it is not displaying heroism in the war.

In the new Armenian republic, there are as many as hundreds of small political parties. Despite this, there is little variation between the various parties. It is this chaos that makes political progress very difficult. The failure of politicians to make progress further hinders their legitimacy. Additionally, there are commonly claims of election fraud. The opposition bolsters them in order to help itself. This causes foreign election monitors to be brought in. In the last election, European and American election monitors reported that election fraud existed. In that election, Kocharian won by a landslide causing most to believe that he would have won regardless of fraud. This situation makes the public lose trust in the elections and the ruling government.

While in Armenia I viewed an election station which was in the middle of district elections. This station was surprisingly well run and supervised. It had a panel of people in charge of counting ballots. A voter had to show their government issued photo identification in order to vote. Likewise, there was a man responsible for overseeing the whole system. He had gone to conferences held by the U.N. and the Council of Europe to learn about fairer voting practices. The only part below voting standards in North America and Western Europe was the ballot machinery. It was nothing more than box sealed with signatures and adhesive bands. This allows for fraud because there are not protections against ballot stuffing. This leaves the responsibility up to the ballot counting panel to catch fraudulent ballots.

In order to fight these problems it will probably take strong Armenian leadership and foreign cooperation. Armenia will depend on the Council of Europe to usher in protections for civil rights. Foreign aid, investment, and management can greatly help Armenia's economic future. As Armenia's neighbors emerge from conflict, political and economic progress will be better facilitated. While it will take time, there is much potential for advancement in Armenia.

First Impressions of Armenia

by Elly Dewan

I learned of Armenia when I was in elementary school because my neighbors are Armenian and I would see their things in their home that were of the Armenian culture. I tried the foods they ate. Also, Gina, my childhood friend would come home from an Armenian school. I would hear them speak a different language. Even though I heard a lot about Armenia, I still never knew where Armenia was on the globe or if it was a country or a city anything like that.

From visiting the museums and reading books I now know that there was a genocide, and that many Turkish people killed many Armenians, and the people were tortured and mistreated. The Armenian Genocide resembles the holocaust and the way the Jews were treated because innocent people were killed just because of their ethnic group. Its capital is Yerevan, Armenia is a small country bordered by Iran and Turkey. I know that the colors in the flag represent different things. The red represents blood, the blue represents the sky and orange is supposed to represent the sun. I know there is no drinking age or gambling age. I know that love is taken very seriously and that respect for other people is very good and that you can get drafted into the army at age 18 unless you are in school or if you have a family by the age of 18. I also found out that the currency is in dram and its value is 500 dram to 1 dollar.

I wanted to come to Armenia because I like to travel and I have been to England, Ireland and Peru. I like to travel and see new things and experience new adventures and meet different kinds of people and experience a new kind of living, with different surroundings and different customs. Armenia is different from other places because they live a different life style from clothes to food to bathrooms, and that is exciting to be part of. Also the history of these people is very fascinating and they have been through a lot. It would be nice to learn more about it so I can tell other people what I know so they can be aware of what has happened to another culture.

Yes, everyone loves them because they are so nice and funny and open and accepting to everyone.

I think that they will just get better technology and they will do things to change over all, but I don't think that they will change their houses and get new big cars like Americans do. I think they will stay simple because they are happy the way they are and they have higher priorities like school and family, not cars and money and big houses and things that don't make a big difference.

I think it would be better to have student exchange for one whole year, so the person can learn our education system and we can learn theirs.

Overall Armenia is a very nice place with many fun things to do. What makes Armenia an amazing place is the people who live in the community. They are all nice, loving, interesting people, who truly care about others. They offer their best to the American kids and they care about how we are doing and if we are enjoying their country. They are trying to give us a great and memorable experience.

I feel happy to be here in Armenia and I feel like people really love and care for me and it's good to be around people like that. If it weren't for the people I don't know how good this trip would have been.

Agrarian Culture of Armenia

by Alexandra Carver

Interviewee: Emma, 70 yrs, Vaghatin Village (near Sissian)

Translator: Nellie Isakhanyan

Many of Armenia's rural villages are made up of farmers. We walked through villages and visited farmers, saw the animals and the tools that they use to make a living.

Their tools, from what I saw, include tractors and many hand tools like hoes, rather than the huge machinery of the United States. Their work is very hard: on the group's return to Yerevan from Sissian Village, I was able to interview one woman, Emma, from the village of Vaghatin. She told me that their work is very difficult; she gets up every morning at 5:00 a.m. to milk their four cows. Even so, though, she seemed very content and welcoming toward us, and very willing to answer all my questions. She was 70 years old and sang a song for us after serving forty people lunch single-handedly, including baking her own *jungala-hutz* (which is an authentic Armenian bread recipe from Karabagh, using 13 herbs indigenous to the region, which she had transplanted). The farmers seem as though their life is difficult but they cope with it and are used to the work; they make do with the tools and animals they have. In my family and other people I know, we depend on grocery stores for our produce and food; here they do it all themselves. Emma's family has lived in the village their whole lives, and on their current farm for 16 years. The crops that they grow include many of the vegetables that we grow in the U.S., such as potatoes, corn, tomatoes, onions, garlic, beans, cucumbers, and greens. They also farm bees. They use extra corn that they do not eat to make flour, and then to make bread. Leftovers that they do not eat are sold or traded, pickled, made into jams, or turned back into the



earth to compost. The air and water is clean enough for them to grow crops well, but the soil is very rocky (as it often is in New England), so they have to remove lots of large rocks from it. They do not export their products, only trade and sell locally.

Armenia does not farm organically; chemicals are used in their growing to keep insects away from their plants. The amount of pesticides that they use depends on the conditions in a given year. Most mountain villages are too far from cities to find jobs in other areas, and the mountains are very rural; farming is their only real option.

The farmers do own their land, but they pay annual tax on it to the Armenian government. This causes difficulties because they often don't earn enough money in return for their work. They are very self-sufficient; their milk comes from their own cows, their honey from their bees, and their food and vegetables from their own land, so if they can't get something themselves it's very difficult to get it at all.

The Armenian government does not subsidize its farmers when harvests are bad, and never did, not even during the Communist government. However, during Communism they received a salary; now they receive nothing. The U.S. government does help sometimes, by giving oil, corn, and flour during very rainy years or bad harvests, and the aid is spread throughout the village.

Following our lunch, Emma sang us an Armenian ballad, which used lyrics composed from situations that occurred on our visit. I reckon this will now be part of her family's oral tradition, and I wonder whether years from now, generations will sing this song, of the strangers who came to visit their village one day.

Journal Entry

by Julian Chippendale



Saturday's trip to Echmiadzin was incredible. I could not believe that we were visiting the first church in the world! It was very beautiful. The artifacts in the cathedral were amazingly well preserved. One of the first things we noticed when we arrived was that everyone dances, all the time. It is very different from what I'm use to in the U.S. I like it. I really enjoyed our visit to the Armenian Dance and Culture Center. The children performers were very talented. The Armenian traditions can easily be seen in its dance and music. It is very good. I could not believe the amount of skill and effort exhibited by the dancers.

The Vernisazh Crafts Market is very nice. I have never seen such a large outdoor crafts market before. There are thousands of beautiful hand made and very intricate crafts there. I was very happy to visit this market. I wish to return sometime. We should have them in the U.S. The talent show on Monday was very fun. Everyone performed wonderfully. I could not believe the first female dancer was 9 years old. She was incredible. There was music, dance, juggling and much more. I was impressed by all those who participated.

A couple days ago we visited Bars Media. I am ecstatic. The documentary work they do around the world is exactly what I have always dreamed of doing! Everyone was very kind and I am hoping to get an internship with them during college. I am so glad I was able to come on this trip, otherwise I highly doubt I would have ever met them. I was so impressed and happy about our meeting that I'm now sure that I will take Armenian and Russian classes when I get back to the U.S. I love this country, its people, culture and music/dance. They will always remain close to me.

Environmental Project/ Armenia Unless We All Do Our Part

by Sara Hartunian-Credit

My project in Armenia was the promotion of environmental awareness and protection as a way to support the development of a civil society. Americans generate enough waste every year to fill a convoy of ten-ton garbage trucks, 145,000 miles long, which would circle the equator six times. This trash includes enough aluminum to rebuild the American airfleet 71 times, enough steel to reconstruct Manhattan, and enough paper and wood to heat 5 million homes for 200 years. These statistics sparked my interest and desire to do my part in reducing waste in America as well as to increase environmental awareness in Armenia. We only have one planet to protect and respect.

No matter how different our religion, language, race, or culture, we all share in the responsibility of taking care of our environment. I have grown up in a society that prides itself in the protection of our forests, rivers and wildlife, and I am proud to have had the chance to share that pride with a country beginning to explore environmental concerns.

The focus of my project was to motivate students to assist in the cleanup of their environment and to help them realize that even the smallest effort can make a difference toward environmental protection. I felt the best way to accomplish my goal was to focus on ways that everyone could individually contribute to a healthier environment.

I decided to focus on alleviating the accumulation of trash by teaching about compostable materials, ways to recycle, and how to reuse materials that normally might be thrown away.

It was a challenge that began on the first day of the exchange when my homestay, Lilit, asked me: "Miss Joanne says we are to talk about trash. Why would anyone care about trash?" I knew that Lilit's question was not an unusual one and that the concept of actually saving trash and using it for other things was a developing concept in Armenia. In order to implement a project, I would first need Lilit's help in learning about what was presently being done with the garbage and waste in Armenia. Soon after I arrived, I was able to directly witness the disposal of trash and garbage. In the time that I had prior to my presentation, I saw things that I had not imagined or even expected to see regarding waste handling. Everyday, as we walked to school, I saw piles of trash on almost every street corner that had been packed on top of more trash placed next to other piles of trash. It was amazing to me that nobody seemed to think that there was anything that could be done to decrease the piles of trash lining the street. I saw many people, however, who, in an attempt to reduce the volume of trash, would burn the piles. Although burning the trash successfully reduces the size of the piles, it creates air pollution and toxic ash residue that have the potential to cause even more problems. Then, after viewing the sky-high piles of trash at the dump on the way to Noubarashan, I was ready to give my talk.

Together, Lilit and I talked to the students and teachers and discussed with them what could be done as individuals and as a group to reduce, reuse and recycle trash. We discussed the concept of biodegradable products and the length of time it takes for products to decompose. We introduced daily composting and how certain products do not need to be thrown away. The discussion was informative and generated many questions as well as enthusiasm to start contributing towards a better environment. As a result, we donated three baskets to School 65 that we labeled paper, plastic and compost, in an attempt to begin the process of environmental support. Additionally, we proposed the following project: we knew that the American students would have extra space in their suitcases on the way home to the United States, and we were also aware that there was no present program in Armenia to recycle all the plastic bottles generated on our trip.

We proposed, therefore, that the American students take the used plastic bottles back home in their suitcases and then recycle the bottles through the already established recycling programs in the United States. The American students were eager to help, and as a group, we were successful in bringing back suitcases full of plastic bottles. I am proud and grateful to have had the opportunity to facilitate this increased awareness of the opportunities and benefits of recycling/composting in Armenia as a step towards the increased protection of the earth's environment.

1. U.S. Environmental Protection Agency. Recycling Works! State and Local Solutions to Solid Waste management Problems. January 1989, document #530-SW-89-014, p. 3.

Outbound Exchange Group Visits Yerevan

(continued from page 1)

Noubarashen is far off the beaten tourist path. The visit by the team was the residents' first exposure to people outside their facility, as no other group has ever visited the town which houses the city dump, a hospital for the mentally ill and the boarding school. Classes in hair cutting, carpentry, and sewing serve to teach the boys a trade and help them reenter the community as productive members of its society. Upon release from the institution, a university education is impossible for these children due to the cost, and the boys will enter the military upon graduation.

Alexandra Carver, Arlington, took Armenian languages lessons prior to her trip. She said, "It made it a little easier to communicate with my host family, and I was able to tell strangers who tried to speak to me in Armenian that I didn't understand the language. What I found most surprising about the Armenian people was their acceptance of us. They were eager to know us and ready to let us into their homes and teach us about themselves and learn about us. They are a people who like to learn, value education and appreciate diversity. I think the most important thing I have gained from this program is a much better understanding of Armenia's culture as a whole, and the many wonderful new friends I have made from this program. I cherished getting to know both Armenians and Americans and I hope to keep in touch with them." Christopher Lo, Belmont, who said that without this program he probably would not have considered visiting Armenia on his own, he commented, "The program was able to give me a better knowledge and understanding of foreign affairs." Benjamin Dewart, Cambridge was excited to share his experience with his family, friends, and community and spearhead a project of his own. He shared, "I am now more interested in societal improvement and development, political science and foreign affairs with a much greater understanding of the rest of the world."

While in Armenia, participants were able to visit offices of the UN, Peace Corps and United States Embassy as well as have short internships in environmentalism, medicine, law, business, media and music. Students interested in medicine were able to attend two surgeries which is an opportunity not afforded them in the US.

From cafes and discos in the city; to riding donkeys, making bread, and milking cows in the village, to donating chickens and a cow to villagers, the students experienced first hand an emerging democracy recovering from communism. Their contribution of time and energy not only impacted the lives of the people they met, but left a lasting impression upon their own hearts and minds. For more information about CYSCA, consult www.cysca.org. Selection for next years' trip will be in December. To receive an application contact Rev. Hartunian, 617-484-0776 or e-mail: cyscaschools@hotmail.com.

Leadership

by Alec Kherlopian

When you get knocked down, who's there to pick you up? Who is there to give you confidence? A LEADER! A LEADER! First of all let me explain what are the qualities of a leader. They are as follows: the ability to listen to peers carefully, ability to understand the characteristics of the individuals, and the ability to build up confidence. In Armenia, it's hard to tell who the leaders are amongst the students. This is because all of the students act like each other. However, once you are around these kids for a while, you can understand their leadership qualities. For instance, a girl of eighteen years of age was a very good dancer, and her talent of dancing led to her strong character. Through this character she influenced others and helped her friends to stay confident with their relationships. Therefore, she became a great role model.

This ties in with my next observation of gender roles. The boys are very controlling towards the girls because of their strong egos. Therefore, the boys feel they are the leaders. An example that shows their controlling attitude is when a girl has a boyfriend, the girl has to call her boyfriend every hour to tell him where she is and what she's doing. I wonder if it's a trust issue or a control issue? From interviewing some teachers, I came to the conclusion that the selection process for class leaders in schools was not democratic. The teachers select the students who achieve best behavior, the highest grades, the most creativity, and students interested in environmental issues.

From the results of the interviews with the Armenian students I deduced how the students create friendships with one another. In situations where they meet someone new, they break the ice by telling a joke, and from the reaction to the joke they understand the peer's character. They also show their leadership qualities by encouraging their teammates during games.

The one observation I made that rang a bell in my head, was that the Armenian students believe that money is needed to lead their community to improvement. However, from what I have seen, many little projects can be done without money. For instance, creating smoke free opportunities, cleaning up their communities, and public awareness rallies on health and moral issues.

The CYSCA program had a great impact in choosing the future leaders from the schools involved. The Armenian students that came to America had unique characteristics: confidence, optimism, understanding, and encouragement. These characteristics are going to lead their peers and their nation to a bright and promising future.

When I think of the Armenian people, their leadership potentials and their future role in politics, I am reminded with the analogy: 'the best violinist will not necessarily make the best conductor'.

I would like to take a moment to share my gratitude and thanks to the U.S. Department of State Bureau of Educational and Cultural Affairs and the leadership of CYSCA members who gave us this unique opportunity.

Proverbs

by Christopher Lo

While in Armenia I studied Proverbs as my research project. I found that my questions helped me gather information efficiently. Some of my questions, however, were not that great and did not help in the overall project. Questions like "Which is your favorite proverb?" are not very good in research but came out of my own personal curiosity. Other questions are hard to answer and the answer is not straightforward, like "Are different ones used in different generations?"

In general however, I found out the Armenian proverbs are very much like American ones. At first I thought that this was because America is such a diverse place.

I later realized that many of our proverbs came about at the birth of our nation, before it became more diverse.

This led me to believe that many proverbs came from everyday life and that because both Armenians and Americans experience life, similar proverbs resulted. I also found out that many proverbs came from religion because of the question "Are there many proverbs in your religion?" The proverbs that relate to religion were unsurprisingly similar to ones I've heard because I share Christianity with the Armenians. Even though the proverbs in Armenia were in Armenian, they translated into ones similar to ours, though they don't flow like American ones. I found that sharing something with the Armenians was somewhat comforting and made me feel more at home in Armenia.

First Half of the Day

by Chris Albano

Today started off on the wrong foot as I woke up and could not get back to sleep. The wind was howling, and I was cold. Apparently, so was my host mom, because she got up and shut the window. I felt bad, because if it weren't for me, the house wouldn't have been so uncomfortably cold. After a series of breathing exercises though, I managed to doze off for the rest of the night. I woke up and was exhausted. It was 7:15, and I just lay in bed for 15 minutes. It was rather dull. However it was during this time when it occurred to me that I was acclimating well. I was lazily dreaming that I had gotten up and was getting dressed. I typically do this at home, however now in my subconscious I was seeing myself in my room in Armenia, not America. I found this to be most motivational, and I began to get up. I needed sustenance, so my host mother made me a light breakfast consisting of tomatoes, cucumbers, and some rolls. It was good. I also found that I was beginning to adapt to vegetables, which made me nervous, but happy. The best part of the meal was easily the tea, which was strawberry flavor. I was so happy when I had it, because usually tea like that is too sweet or strong, and it ends in disappointment. This time, however, I was sent into jubilation, and was extremely content. We were going to Echmiadzin today, so I had to look sharp. It took me forever to tie my tie, and I was glad my host father was sleeping, as it would have been somewhat embarrassing to have him help me. After finally getting it right, we left for the bus. Upon seeing what the Armenians were wearing, I began to come to terms with the amount of rub off America has had on Armenia. We then arrived at Echmiadzin, and we all gasped. It was a marvel to behold. There was amazing architecture, which upon closer investigation, we saw to be Roman style, with emphasis on the arch (allowing for windows and ceilings). At first, this blew my mind. I questioned, "Why would there be Roman architecture here?" And then I realized that Armenia had been an ancient kingdom, and that it was entirely possible that it had shared and exchanged ideas with Romans. The one thing that remained astonishing was that level of mastery of a foreign concept at such an early time. There were a lot of people walking around, including priests. This was normal, but the one thing that I didn't understand was the wardrobe of the priests. They wore heavy black robes in the middle of the summer. I felt bad for them, and I was curious as to what person decided that priests should wear that as a wardrobe, but I held my tongue, as saying that would create indefinite amounts of controversy. We entered the church, and I stood back in shock. I am not religious, but I am a fan of good art and architecture, and believe me, Echmiadzin had no shortage of either one. There seemed to be a tomb in the middle of the room, and it was beautiful. It made me want to become religious. It was truly incredible. We got the grand tour of the place. It was a good way to kill 15 minutes, but I would rather have seen it myself. We then got some candles, but Arevik paid for mine. I felt bad, as she had already showed me such kindness by accepting me into her house. I wish she had let me pay. We went the church museum after, and that was fun. We weren't kept on a heavy tight leash there, and we wandered and chatted as we pleased. That relaxation alone made it enjoyable. The Catholicos, or head of the Armenian Church, led us down to the pagan ruins beneath the temple. I thought he looked like a respectable guy, with the best English of anyone who I have seen for this long. He wore all white, and had white hair and a white beard. He reflected all of the sunlight on him, like some divine saint, which, I guess makes a lot of sense. I liked talking with him, and he seemed very intelligent. I respect him very much. The ruins themselves were boring and there is little use going into depth about them.

Then we headed down to the Vernisazh, the weekend market, selling a large amount of cultural goods, which I found to be extremely good. I did some shopping, but I had more fun haggling with Arevik.

The shop keepers knew they were selling cheap, so whenever I would try to drop the price they would drop it a little lower for me. I had fun, and it was obvious that Arevik appreciated me not buying such expensive things unless I could get them for cheaper. I got some gifts for my family, and then Arevik and I went to the art section, where we were absolutely stunned. It was amazing. There were so many amazing paintings, and I was so glad that I got to see them. It was a good common ground for Arevik and me. She likes making art, and I like watching it. I enjoyed it thoroughly. I had a good time at Vernisazh, and that day was great.



Journal Entry

by Peter Gallaher

Today was probably the most emotionally moving day of the trip. After a long, hot bus ride we arrived at a center for young boys without parents and young delinquents. I was a little nervous going in, since I had no idea what to expect. After seeing the main building, we finally got to meet the children. Both our group and the children seemed shy at first, but after a while, everyone opened up. Soccer seemed to help break the language barrier that stood between the Americans and the young boys; we were all playing and having fun within a half hour of arrival. Frisbee and other card games seemed to be played by the Armenians in our group, some Americans, and the more shy children. It was truly moving to see how fortunate I am, from the look of the building it looked like the children had a life that would seem like torture to most Americans. The children looked like they were about 8 or 9 years old, but it turned out that they were just malnourished teenagers. After being with the children for a while, many people looked like they were about to cry. The children asked why people were crying; they were told by the Armenians in our group that the people crying had sand in their eyes. The children really didn't deserve to live there; nobody should have to live in those conditions. As we were leaving, the children seemed to not want us to leave, which made it more depressing to hear what Rev. Hartunian had to say. Rev. Hartunian was informed that the children would soon be starting military training, and would be sent to the frontlines. This information broke most of the group into tears, it is hard to see these children and realize that their lives are going to be wasted. I think this day truly opened my eyes to how fortunate America is and how lucky I am to not have to struggle to survive every day.

Journal entry day one...

by Elly Dewan

Today has been the longest day ever! I woke up at 6 am due to my excitement for the big trip ahead of me. I did some last minute things before it was time to head over to Belmont High School to learn about Armenian history by Ms. Joanne's husband. When I walked into the room everyone was sitting and I felt like they were all watching me. I could recognize a few, but, these people were still unfamiliar to me. I thought to myself that all these people by the end of the three weeks were going to be like family. I took my seat and listened to what was being taught. We got into cars and then went to the airport. We went to Alewife then got on the train to go to the airport. Sara Credit and I stayed together. I could tell that she would be the one I would be most close with. She is from Belmont High school, and she seemed very outgoing, just like me. At the airport time passed very slowly and we all started to mingle, I played cards and talked with other people. I then went to my last family dinner for three weeks. It was sad to leave but still I was excited to go and then it was final goodbyes. I knew that I wouldn't miss my family and friends that much because in Armenia I would have a new family and new friends. We began to board the plane and I was next to Sara which was good because both don't like to fly. We grabbed hands and laughed and quietly screamed when the plane took off. Now I was in store for a 6 hour plane ride. We got to Vienna finally and I was tired because it was 4 am back in Boston, but I was not tired because I was filled with excitement. Leaving Boston it was 9:45PM and it ended up taking 6 hours 48 mins. Since we are moving east it is getting lighter so I feel like I haven't had night in a long time. During our time in Vienna we went on a bus tour which was fun. We went to a sandwich shop and ate lunch and visited some sights. It's weird that it is 12:22 pm here and a few minutes ago my watch alarm went off for a 7:05 am alarm. So its only morning back in Boston. We will get on a plane and arrive at around 4 am. Armenia is 9 hours ahead of Boston. I am afraid they will want to talk to me but I'll be too tired to talk. We are about to get on our plane and my "plane buddy" Sara is next to me again. The flight attendant came by and offered me candy and then Sara asked for some and the lady was like "I'm sorry, these are only for the kids".

We Arrived and got our boxes and luggage and went through necessary things, then it was time to exit the airport. I was feeling so many different things. I was afraid to meet my home stay, what if she didn't like me? What if I didn't like her? What if her family was weird? What if we have nothing in common? What if we get angry or bored or annoyed with each other? I was the first one to walk down the halls which led outside and then all a sudden there was a huge glass window and all these kids are out there and they are all looking at me. Chris Lo was behind me and I wondered if he was as afraid as I was. All the kids started screaming and smiling when they saw us. I just sort of stood there like an animal looking at oncoming traffic. I was overwhelmed and my mind was going crazy so I kind of just laughed out loud and smiled at everyone. Then I passed onto the other side of the glass and a girl came running up to me. She was very pretty and seemed excited. She had brown hair and wasn't too tall, and, when I saw her coming towards me everyone else around just disappeared. She gave me a hug and said her name was Anna. Then she started to introduce me to all the other kids. I couldn't remember their names and then I just introduced myself and smiled. We had small talk like about the plane ride and it was kind of awkward. We would have random silences and then we would both just smile and giggle. Then I got scared that it would be like this for the whole time. I thought we were both outgoing but just shy. Anna and I went to the bus and loaded my luggage. Then we went back to go see the other kids, and, I observed how they greeted their home stays, and it was the same. Everyone seemed happy to see their home stays but there was still that awkward silence of meeting a new person. I figured it was normal to be shy in front of a new person with whom you are going to spend the next three weeks of your life. We talked about the birds that were going crazy, and about what we like, and I was trying to think back on the E-mails we sent each other and try to remember who she likes and what she likes.

As scared I was to meet my host sister I was even more scared to meet her family. On the bus ride to school 65 I thought what her family would be like. We finally arrived at school 65 and I met her mom and her sister. They seemed very nice they carried my luggage and it was totally weird because they couldn't speak English, and I just met Anna, and I didn't know what to say to the mom and sister. So we just walked back in silence with a few words translated by Anna. By now I was really tired.

While walking another thing entered my mind, what does her house look like? Is it small? Is it nice? Is it dirty? Walking by each apartment complex these questions floated around in my mind. Finally we took a right onto this little through street and we walked and I was looking around at all the apartments that looked alike and I thought to myself, "How do they find their way around?" We finally got to their apartment and it was on the 5th floor!

The mom and sister were carrying my stuff so it wasn't that hard for me to walk up. We arrived on the top floor and opened the door.

I looked around and everything looked very neat and nice and cozy. I set my stuff in my room and it was pretty small. There was a big bed and a little bed.

The little bed was mine, and it had all the stuffed animals on it, and, it made me happy for some reason. Then the mom signaled for me to come into the kitchen and the table was filled with food and snacks, like cakes and cookies and bread. I ate a little and kind of looked around and got acquainted with my new surroundings. The sister was looking at my magazine with David Beckham on the cover; she told me she liked him. I gave out my presence and they were very grateful. I was afraid they wouldn't like them or if they would think I was rude because I gave them so much and stuff like that. I put on the new pj's they gave me and fell right asleep.

Now that I have taken a long nap I am refreshed and the funny thing is that when I woke up there were people in the room kind of just looking at me. I felt kind of weird because I never had people watch me sleep, but I guess so Americans sleep differently, and its fascinating to them. I knew that might happen because Ms. Joanne told us that random people would come over just to get a look at the "American". I felt kind of happy that people were interested to see me. I woke up and had spaghetti with the family and I met the dad and grandma. I was most afraid of the dad because he said very few words. That was the most awkward meal I've ever had because I was at a table with a family that only one of them spoke English. I went back to the room to get changed so I could meet up with the group to meet at school 65 for orientation, but my luggage was already unpacked, and my clothes were folded, and put away neatly. Walking to school was different because all these people would be looking at us when we walked down the street. Especially the boys would look and just keep looking. I think they would just watch because we were Americans. In America the same thing happens if we see someone different: they tend to look, but we are more subtle, and don't continuously stare. During the orientation I was looking around at all these new strangers including some of the Americans. I would comfort myself because I was now sure that soon these strangers would be friends. After the orientation we danced and it was weird to do their kind of dance. It looks so good when they do it, but I feel really goofy when I try to dance. We returned home and I did again and then I got to realize that the first word I would need to learn is how to say "full" (gushtem) I don't know how to spell it but that's how it sounds. Now its time to go to bed, and I like my host family very much and I love the little community they live in and I am excited to be here and for the adventures that are about to happen. I know that I have just met a bunch of new friends and I am excited for tomorrow.

Armenian Gender Roles

by Julia Dekermendjian

After months of anticipation and a multiple daylong journey, my fellow CYSCA friends and I finally arrived in Yerevan, Armenia. Being exposed to a new environment and lifestyle for 21 days, I discovered new parts of myself while simultaneously exploring the wide variety of similarities and differences between Armenia and America. One of the most noticeable differences was also an integral part of the Armenian culture, and this was gender roles. Gender roles are such a critical part of the Armenian society and culture because they are part of what makes Armenia such a unique place and they are also in some ways a hindrance to Armenia's growth.

Armenia, unlike the United States, seems to be missing a solid and prosperous middle class. After meeting with Kim Hargan, the Public Affairs officer at the United States Embassy, I discovered one of the solid reasons why. Armenian men are required to go to the military at age 18, but this training can be excused by passing an oral examination, a prerequisite for entering the University. Unfortunately, in Armenia, money is often times more valued than honesty and even law, and those boys who really should not be entering the University, do. Women, because they are not required by law to go to the military, can concentrate on getting a University degree in an honest manner. However, out of 160-170 doctoral slots, women, as Harkin explained, occupy only approximately two of them. So, although the women should be getting the professional degrees, the men do, even though they are, in reality, less qualified. So, what you get is a high graduation rate of boys (through corruption), a low percentage of women in professional positions (even though they are probably more qualified), and a bad workforce since males dominate (by tradition and also under these corrupt standards).

If there was less corruption and therefore more opportunity for women, then maybe women would make up a larger percentage of graduate students, thereby increasing their chances of acceding to more professional positions.

Furthermore, the role of the male in Armenia is so set in tradition that it stands out like a black sheep in a herd of white sheep. Men basically have unprecedented authority and a manifestation of this is seen when females often ask to be escorted by them. When I asked if this was merely for traditional purposes or if it was for real security reasons, I learned that it was performed on the basis of tradition. A good example of male predominance happened to a friend and me near the end of our trip. My homestay, myself, and another American, were in need of directions to get to someone's house for lunch. So, two guys were sent out to escort us home. I guess that I was so used to the Armenian culture by then, that I expected to see two tall, buff men. This one boy, who fit this mental image, was propped up against a stonewall, looking like he was waiting to pick someone up. So, my homestay approached him, to see if he was there for us. Wrong—he was just picking up his grandmother. Instead, what came were two short, and completely non-buff ten year olds. The first thought that ran through my mind was "Jees, this is kind of embarrassing. They are two times smaller than me, yet expected to take care of me if something bad happens!" But then, I remembered that in Armenia, it is the male presence in general that matters, not so much the age, body type, or courage.

But, even the women seem to have come to terms with their inferior status. One girl even said: "Armenian men here are respectful. Women can't have what they want, but at least they are respectful." Although this may seem outrageous to some of us today, we must remember that the United States has had a multitude of feminists like Margaret Sanger and Elizabeth Cady Stanton, who paved the way for equal rights.

We must remember that the United States is a young country, but that from its early years, it has had some sense of "remembering the ladies" as Abigail Adams once said, and that Armenia has not been so lucky in this sense.

However, just because Armenia has not had an extended history of hard-core action for gender equality, it does not mean that no such efforts exist today. In fact, the United Nations is finding resonance within the Armenian society for its efforts to advance the role of women in the economical, social, and political spheres. Furthermore, other countries, including the United States, have exchange programs that encourage the advancement of women. Even more, one must recognize that still, within the small but growing middle class, women have expanded their responsibilities and recognize (more so than before) their right to equality. Although it will take years and a multitude of efforts, what is important to recognize, is that Armenia is gradually changing, and that it is through incremental changes that women will soon enough enjoy the same status as men.



A Step in the Right Direction: Armenia's Market Economy

by Sarah Malconian

Thirteen years ago one of the largest superpowers in the world [Union of Soviet Social Republic] crumbled leaving its nations to rebuild and start anew. Being one of the U.S.S.R's many republics, Armenia started with a clean slate. Through trial and tribulation the Armenian people just recently started to regain the wealth they once had. In order to continue to build up Armenia's struggling economy its businesses need to change and catch up to the capitalistic practices of the rest of the world. Unfortunately the combination of a corrupt government and a monopolistic economy serves as a setback for its entrepreneurs. Armenia seems to be doing circles in its fight to regain its economy, only to come back empty handed.

Although it appears that the odds are stacked against the country, Armenians seem determined to become a more democratic state. With its overwhelming marketplaces and overbearing salespeople, downtown Yerevan is a sight for sore economic eyes. Professor Aghasi Enokyan from Yerevan State University feels Armenia's major setback is that foreign countries now "own" the country. Italy capitalizes on Armenia's water supply, France with the exports of brandy and cognac, Greece with all phone lines including cellular services, and Russia taking over Armenia's energy plant along with their abundant supply of rubber and mineral sources. Professor Enokyan also feels this foreign business influence leaves the Armenian businessmen with a low level competition.

Continued on page 18

A Step in the Right Direction: Armenia's Market Economy

(continued from page 17)

With the same products being sold the economy of Armenia can only slowly rebuild the national budget they had before their troubles. One might ask how Armenia is able to stay afloat in this growing capitalist world. Armenia's main trade is the cutting and shaping of diamonds, which supplies the economy with a small but steady income. The support of family members in other countries, such as: Russia, Ukraine, Europe, and America, have a huge influence on the national budget. Unfortunately the closed borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan also have greatly affected the growth of Armenia.

In a recent interview with Vigen Sargsyan, assistant to the President, Sargsyan informed us that in the last three consecutive years the GDP of Armenia has grown 12%. The country is growing immensely and hopefully this skeptical foreign influence will turn as a "shoulder to lean on" for the growth of the economy instead of a barrier. The efforts of the Armenian people have also helped the economy.

Without the continuing businessmen working long hours to get a small profit, the economy would not even get that small profit.

The Armenian people have been bullied and oppressed for generations and generations, but with this new found independence their attitude is to lean on each other for support and to never give up their fight. Being in Armenia I was able to witness first hand how strong the Armenian people are as a whole. They present themselves as a united front, which probably has to do with their routes dating back for centuries. While using one of the city's sources of transportation, the mini-bus, it was proven to me that Armenians will not let their country die and fall behind the rest of the world, for their compassion and support was something I had never experienced before.

My home-stay sister, Arus and I started off the ride as the first passengers sitting in the way back. As the bus stopped at each stop I took notice of how many people were getting in the bus, and how many seats were left. Not familiar with the system, I assumed that once all the seats were filled the bus would stop stopping and bring us to our final destination. There were fifteen passenger seats and fifteen passengers, when the bus came to a halt at a large group of Armenians. Three more people entered, where there was no room. All of the sudden a young woman and man, complete strangers, arranged themselves so that the elderly woman that had just entered would have a seat. Once the door closed the driver sped off only to stop at another crowd of people. Another older woman entered with no place to sit. The same young woman that had moved for the previous woman offered to hold the new passenger's bag while she held onto another passenger and the roof of the bus. As the driver continued to stop the number of passengers increased. With each new passenger came a new puzzle piece to fit into the twenty some odd people. Right before the bus approached our stop, I took a head count of the number of Armenians shoved into that little bus. As we left the bus I remembered thinking that we were twenty four people in a fifteen passenger bus, we worked together so everyone was able to come along for the ride, and everyone had a "seat." As we left the stop to meet up with friends, I knew that Armenia was going to get better and regain its wealth, I knew that we had a purpose here in this great country, but I also processed how much I had learned from that one ride in that one mini-bus.

From personal experience to primary interviews the evidence that Armenia is changing presented itself. Hopefully the Armenian people will be presented with more opportunities to create a truly free economy without subsidies. With the foreign influence in government it is quite possible that Armenia will shed its corruption and start honestly practicing democracy.

Civil Society Essay On Free Media

by Nicholas Sahagian

It has now been a few weeks since our trip to Armenia. Even though my clock is ticking on US time and my stomach has re-adjusted to US food, I still cannot believe that I am back in America. Since I've come back, all my relatives have been asking me about my trip to Armenia. I rack my memory to answer their questions, but I cannot find an answer. My time in Armenia went so fast, sometimes I feel like I was never there at all. Although I feel that the most important, and my favorite part, of the trip was making close bonds with all the Americans and Armenians, I truly enjoyed the lectures we took part in. By gaining knowledge about Armenia's cultural, political, and economic climates, we were able to compare them with our own in the United States. With all this information, we were able to discuss, what makes a civil society?

One particular topic I personally thought was necessary for civil society is a free and independent media. Without a free and independent media, the common people would not be properly informed on what their leaders are currently doing for their country and their system of government could become easily corrupt. An example of the importance of free media was a controversial television station in Armenia, A1plus, which was supposedly kicked off the air for reporting on governmental corruption in Armenia. Through meetings we scheduled in Armenia, we were fortunate enough to be able to get two sides of the story on this topic through a woman who worked at A1plus as well as

the assistant to the president of Armenia.

The first official we spoke to was the woman from A1plus. She slowly explained her story to us, proudly stating how independent A1plus was, and how they were not afraid to report on the corruption occurring in the current government. According to this woman, A1plus has been bribed by many sources, including the government, multiple times to write false stories about people, but unlike the other Armenian news stations, they refused



to make any compromises and were able to stay uncorrupt and unbiased. However, because of their refusal to cooperate, the government kicked them off the air. Although this woman may be telling the truth, she is biased against the government.

Later on our trip, we were able to meet the Assistant to the President of Armenia. At the end of our meeting, I asked him about his views on A1plus. His story was completely different from the woman we previously spoke to. He said that basically, A1plus was not kicked off the air by the government, but by competition. According to this government official, a better news program took over their time slot and as a result, A1plus was moved off the air through competition. He also added that they played pirated movies. Like the woman from A1plus, this official was also biased, except he was on the side of the government.

So what did I learn from these discussions? Why is a free and independent media so important? Because in order to have a civil society, the common people must stay informed with the current events in their country. They can only do this if the media is allowed to function properly without outside influence. If the media becomes influenced by outside sources, it will become corrupt and the people will be uninformed and will not be able to form their own opinions.

During these discussions, I realized that both speakers' stories were completely biased to their own beliefs and completely different from each other. Regardless of what the actual reason was for closing A1plus, I learned that Armenians are now allowed to openly discuss their views and opinions, when only about 13 years ago, this would have been forbidden. It is satisfying to see that Armenia is progressing towards allowing freedom of speech. As long as this type of growth is encouraged, it will be possible for Armenia to change and truly become a civil society.

THE ARMENIAN EXCHANGE

Our heartfelt appreciation to Dr. Norair Khrimyan, Principal of #65 for his patience and dedication to this program and opening his school for our daily activities and our volunteer projects. The Recreation Program for the neighborhood children was a big success and we thank him for use of the school yard for the many games and sport activities we planned as our joint volunteer project. Our sincere appreciation to Mrs. Karine Zatikyan for her kindness and sensitivity during our exchange. Students from Belmont High School had received sad news about one of our friends while in Armenia. She presented all American exchange students with flowers to heal our sadness. She brought us together to talk, remember and share our sorrow. Lest we forget, this program would not have been possible without the help of other volunteers in addition to those listed elsewhere in this publication as committee members. It would not have been possible without the volunteer efforts of many other people. Mr. David Deranian, of Digital Arts and Sciences, Belmont, MA provided many valuable suggestions for guidance in helping us to prepare this student generated paper.

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 Khanko Aper Children's Library
 Matenadaran Book Depository
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by the government because of programming loosely deemed unsavory or oppositionist in nature..

Even with all question of application or licensing favor aside, the dubious independence of Armenia's print media is most attributable to its questionable sources of financing. Despite USAID-supported printing facilities and wide enough circulation figures for publications to exert considerable influence on business and the community at large, Armenians are still hesitant to believe what they read. Newspapers are controlled largely by political parties and wealthy individuals, who as sponsors expect certain viewpoints and allegiances to be expressed in exchange for a publication's necessary funding. The result is self-censorship by journalists and so-called "ordered articles," also known as indirect advertising. Outside of Yerevan, the situation is even worse. Because most villagers live at subsistence levels, few people can afford to buy newspapers. The regional press is severely limited in terms of finances, and because of combined high delivery costs and low sales, papers circulate in limited numbers. As a result, information availability is in stark contrast to that in the city. Unfortunately, the pitfalls of print journalism have become true of television media as well.

Unsustainable as a business because of a limited advertising market which cannot cover broadcasting expenses, channels get the majority of their funds not from outside sources but from their owners, who again are part of the political or economic elite and thus wield significant influence over programming. In the case of both television and print media, it is essentially Armenia's poor financial situation and a scarcity of outside or nonpartisan funding which preclude unbiased reporting. But even with questions of funding aside, the intimidation of media owners and journalists by the authorities with Armenia's libel law has also contributed to a climate of timidity in reporting. In addition, the overall quality of journalism in Armenia has sunken due to a proliferation of poorly written newspapers and badly trained journalists, many of whom are unschooled in modern modes of journalism. In the course of my conversation with Armenians about the independence of their media, I was continually impressed by the passion of even the youngest critics and by their striking awareness of the media's current condition. But out of all my interactions, none was more lasting in my memory, and I'd venture to say, in the memory of my classmates, than a presentation by A1 Plus channel journalist Ruzanna Saghasaryan. A1 Plus, one of the country's most popular television channels and one of its first truly nonpartisan and independent broadcasters, lost its license from the government in April 2002. Translated as A Meg Plus in Armenian, and named to mean first and best by its creators, the channel was the first in Armenia to be independent of sponsors, backed entirely by advertisement money. The channel nationally broadcast live news every half hour, reflecting, as Ruzanna put, reality in every field--no better, no worse than how things really were. The station was famous, if only briefly, for its straight-talking, no-spin, balanced reporting of current events. By using funds derived entirely from advertisers instead of owners, A Meg Plus reported with objectivity as a truly independent media outlet. Speculation is rampant that the government denied A Meg Plus renewal of their license because of its critical coverage of Armenian politics. While it's hard to get a straight answer--station reporters allege conspiracy, while Assistant to the President Vigen Sarkissyan adamantly denies government involvement in the matter--I'm more apt to listen to the viewers themselves.

As an Armenian student put it to me, "A Meg Plus spoke too much truth, so they were closed."

At present, several real dangers stand in the way of freedom and integrity in the Armenian media. Chief among them are a lack of economic independence, decreasing journalistic standards, and legislation which allows for outside influences of governmental and otherwise partisan control. All factors actively preclude the advancement of a truly free and independent media and are an enemy not only to the field of journalism but to the population as a whole. The public's trust towards the media is famously hard to gain and easy to lose. As a result, the Armenian media is in a precarious position, faced with a diminishing role as a meaningful public watchdog and source of valid information for Armenian people.

Free and independent media

by Caroline Smart

Hi. My name is Caroline Smart, and my area of concentration while in Armenia was free and independent media, or more correctly, the lack thereof.

I'd like to start my presentation with a quick anecdote, drawn from a journal entry I made on July 5th while in an Armenian village called Sissian.

"Today is July 5th, Armenia's own Independence Day. Funny, isn't it, that their holiday falls the day after ours? They call theirs Constitution Day; Armenia's constitution as an independent and supposedly democratic republic was signed 13 years ago today after the dissolution of the USSR. It's strange to think that a country so rich in culture and history- the first to adopt Christianity, whose mountain (Ararat) was the landing spot of Noah's Ark, and which is often referred to as the cradle of civilization is, at least governmentally, considered to be a new nation. Joanne even told me that it was only after ratification of its independent status that Armenia was freely able to open its storied doors to the public for tourism. And isn't Armenia considered part of the NIS- New and Independent States? This country deserves more credit."

For me, July 5th was particularly striking in evincing Armenia's difficulty in confidently affirming itself as a modern nation. One visiting the country can't help but feel something palpable holding Armenia back from exercising the rights and liberties afforded a democratic nation. With a post-Soviet constitution created in 1991 that is modeled after that of the United States, Armenia has been largely unable to deliver upon the American-inspired civil liberties it has afforded its people in writing. Chief among these unrealized rights is freedom of speech and of the press, both of which Armenia's new constitution proclaims to protect, but in actuality enforces only loosely. The constitution protecting free speech and freedom of information in Armenia declares: "Everyone is entitled to assert his or her opinion. No one shall be forced to retract or change his or her opinion. Everyone is entitled to freedom of speech, including the freedom to seek, receive, and disseminate information and ideas through any medium of information, regardless of state borders." But you'll get different answers about the truth of the matter, depending on who you talk to. While the government adamantly asserts the existence of a free and independent media, the Armenian lay people will just as passionately disagree. Indeed, what looks hopeful in writing is, in practice, quite different; stringent government regulation, a faltering economy, and minimal private investment have all contributed to a media hopelessly biased and ridden with censorship.

Armenia's most recent history provides the framework for understanding the state of its media. Its quick thrust from Soviet satellite state to independent republic in 1991, coupled with troubled relations and closed borders with Turkey and Azerbaijan, drove the country into devastating economic crisis that defined the Armenian state of the early 1990s. Added to the picture was an information and entertainment deficit stemming from an oversimplified media landscape which consisted of two state-run television channels broadcasting only intermittently and a print media that, although the main source of information, was dramatically reduced in circulation due to paper shortage and decreased means of distribution. In the decade or so that has followed, Armenia's post-Soviet government has begun to rehabilitate itself and function in a more organized manner. Although the immediate crises that originally faced the new nation have subsided, and while the media landscape has begun to enlarge, new roadblocks threaten the viability of truly independent, unpoliticized, and objective media outlets.

As it stands now, Armenia's 1991 Law on Press and Other Means of Mass Media guarantees the media freedom from censorship and proposes that any print-oriented association has the right to found a media outlet by submitting an application for registration to its relevant public body.

Radio and television broadcasting requires more complicated licensing which is distributed on the basis of competition between broadcasters. In both cases, applications can easily be thrown out or licenses denied

by the government because of programming loosely deemed unsavory or oppositionist in nature.

Even with all question of application or licensing favor aside, the dubious independence of Armenia's print media is most attributable to its questionable sources of financing. Despite USAID-supported printing facilities and wide enough circulation figures for publications to exert considerable influence on business and the community at large, Armenians are still hesitant to believe what they read. Newspapers are controlled largely by political parties and wealthy individuals, who as sponsors expect certain viewpoints and allegiances to be expressed in exchange for a publication's necessary funding. The result is self-censorship by journalists and so-called "ordered articles," also known as indirect advertising. Outside of Yerevan, the situation is even worse. Because most villagers live at subsistence levels, few people can afford to buy newspapers. The regional press is severely limited in terms of finances, and because of combined high delivery costs and low sales, papers circulate in limited numbers. As a result, information availability is in stark contrast to that in the city. Unfortunately, the pitfalls of print journalism have become true of television media as well.

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Boys orphanage

by Alex Deranian

Today we went to a boys orphanage for disobedient boys. On my way there I was a little nervous and expecting to see older, kind of shady looking kids but when we arrived there it was a lot different than what I thought. It was these kids ranging from 9 to 12 but they looked like they were 6 and 7 because they had malnutrition and were very skinny. They were dressed in old tattered clothing. We all went to the field in the back of the building to play with the kids. Some of them played soccer with the kids, I played frisbee with some of the others. After playing with the kids for a while everyone began to realize how sweet and nice these little boys were. How could these kids be considered delinquents, I asked myself. Then it occurred to me that the reason they were in this place is because their parents might not have been able to support a child. So after a full day of playing different games with the kids and getting a chance to bond with the them we all returned to the front of the school. I was with Joanne along with a couple other kids when she told us what would happen to all these children. When I heard it my heart dropped to the pit of my stomach. She said she was just told by the director of the orphanage that all these boys are being trained for the army and at age 18 they would be sent to the front line. That's a really sad thought already but we heard it right after we all bonded we these kids and made them really happy. The word of this spread really fast and within minutes everyone was crying. What made it worse is that there was nothing I could do about it. I guess they figure no one will miss them because they're orphans so they're sent to the front line. The whole day was really depressing but it really taught me a great life lesson. It made me view the world in a different way. I was pretty quiet for the rest of the day. I just couldn't stop thinking about those kids, most of them had no future.

An American Kid in Armenia: First Impressions

by Christopher Lo



There have been so many new things and ideas I have experienced in the last few days! So much that I will organize it in chronological order. There have been good and bad things and a lot of unexpected surprises that, no matter how much preparation, we would have never expected. I've traveled to many places such as England, Scotland, France, Geneva, and even the South Pacific, but I still had never experienced anything like Armenia.

When I was first selected for the Armenian exchange program, I was very excited.

As the date of our departure drew closer, however, I seemed to be less and less excited about the trip; I think one of the main reasons for this was nervousness that I experience before doing new things. As I reflect back on these thoughts, I realize how foolish they were, since the nervousness dissolved into one of the best experiences of my life. Being in a new place and seeing things for the first time led me to make many assumptions and even stereotypes.

There was more than one occasion that I found myself doing this on, but every time I realized that I was wrong. One of these wrongly made assumptions I made when we drove from the airport to our home stay's house. As I stared sleepily out of the window, I did not see anyone in the street or any sign of people starting the day. I also noticed that the buildings, the street and the area in general was run down and not nearly as nice as what you see in many familiar places. This led me to think that the people of Armenia were the type that didn't do any work and just sat around all day. This theory was backed up when I was about to go to sleep for the day around 8AM and still hardly anybody was walking outside. I found out how radically wrong I was and realized that Armenian people worked harder than many people in the U.S. The reason why I didn't see anyone up was because they have a different lifestyle than us; something that I expected but didn't realize when I saw it.

The longer I stayed there, the more I realized that many Armenians get up between 8:00 and 9:00 am and go to sleep around 2:00 in the morning. As for the working part, I see changes for the better everyday. Streets got paved, buildings were built or repaired, and the city was improved in small but important ways.

Another thing I assumed about Armenians even before I went there was that everyone was shady and you had to watch your back there. This assumption probably came from the warnings we received, which I and other kids in our group took too seriously. When I got to Armenia however, I found out the people there were some of the nicest I have ever met.

Their kindness and hospitality was beyond any I have experienced in everyday life here in America. I realized that the warnings against pickpockets and kidnappers applied anywhere including the U.S. and that I did not have to worry too much about this, especially with the Armenians looking after me. Examples of warnings are things like you shouldn't take taxi's or, once you are at your home-stay, stay there. The food there was good and somewhat a surprise. Before we left the U.S., some of the Armenian parents gave us some Armenian food to see if we liked it. When I got to Armenia, however, I found that the food was both different and much better than the stuff I had here (no offense to the parents).

I also experienced some challenges while I was there. Among these were the obvious language barrier and cultural differences. Another was getting used to the group and the new environment that we suddenly found ourselves in. Most people would think that language would have been the hardest challenge, and in the beginning it was, but as we got used to our home stays, it became a minor problem and communication wasn't that difficult. This was probably helped by the fact that the Armenian students knew English and they could translate for us, but also, we were learning some Armenian. Other challenges were based around getting used to our group and the culture. We had met most of our group before the trip which helped a little. Most people would think we got to know each other really well while we were there. There were small disagreements while we were there like there are on any trip. After a while people got a little annoyed at each other and others in the group but they kept their bad feelings about each other hidden. I am proud to say that there were no major disputes between the Americans or Armenians, which just added to the pleasure of the experience and trip.

Transportation Report

by Peter Gallaher

Transportation never really seemed to be a problem in Armenia. From what I saw, there were no buses running scheduled routes like in Boston. But what I did see, were small, crowded vans that were called "mini-buses". These vans had routes designated by numbers but didn't appear to have a set schedule. They were around 100 dram and were very convenient.

These Mini-buses were available to most parts of the city and some went out of Yerevan as well. The one thing missing from these buses was handicap accessibility. The whole time in Armenia, I didn't see one wheelchair ramp or wheelchair lift.

Taxis were another mode of transportation. The drivers looked very inexperienced, so we were not allowed to use them. Also, I was told by Armenians that taxis were very expensive. (500 dram)

There were many privately owned cars in Armenia and there always seemed to be traffic everywhere in downtown Yerevan. It was strange to see so many cars since only one of the Armenian kids in our group had parents who owned a car. Many of the cars looked very old, unsafe, and definitely would not meet American emission standards. I did not get a definite answer, but seatbelts did not seem to be a priority in Armenia. None of the Mini-buses had them, and I think the taxis did not have them either.

The other form of public transportation Armenia had to offer was the subway system. Armenia has very beautiful subways and I was told that they were built during soviet times. The floors and walls of the underground stations were made of marble, and most had chandeliers also. Not only were the subways clean, but they were extremely inexpensive. It only cost 50 dram, around 10 cents, to ride the subway. The trains looked to be in shape, but were definitely very old. The trains, like the minibuses, did not seem to have a schedule, but they did come very frequently. The subway system would be almost perfect, but it did not reach everyone who would benefit from it. Although the city provided public transportation, I saw many more people walking and using taxis than using the subways and minibuses.

The only major transportation issue that I think should be addressed in Armenia is the condition of the roads. The roads are in pretty bad shape. They are full of huge potholes, there are tons of rocks and cracks in the street, and the curbs are almost non-existent.

Overall, My experience with Armenian transportation was positive. Everything was fast and reasonably reliable, yet not very comfortable. If more money was put into public transportation, there is a great chance it could flourish and provide transportation to whoever needed it.



ARMENIA THE BEAUTIFUL

by Alex Deranian



Armenia has some of the most beautiful art in the world with some of it dating back to the thirteenth century. Religion is a reoccurring theme in most of Armenia's art and is very important as a recorded visual history of Christianity. Many times you will find murals painted on the walls of churches of different religious images. These renderings are sometimes the only record of many important Christian events. Armenian art goes beyond religious themes. In more modern times Armenian artists branched out into many different styles and genres, and even became experimental. Today, art is not taught in Armenian secondary schools and is not part of a regular curriculum, however, there are several good art universities available for young aspiring artists.

Art is, and will continue to be a very important part of Armenian culture. Art reflects the times in which it was made. For example the art made in medieval Armenia has a strong religious theme while the art during soviet times was very restricted. Compared to the art today which shows how artists have freedom to say much more in their art. Art reflects life.

It is very hard to survive as an artist in Armenia. There are very few who are successful (much like new artists here in America). Some of the famous artists in are Armenia from the 20th century are Martiros Saryan, Minas, Hovhannes Aivazovsky, and Hagop Hagopian. These men and many others were some of Armenia's best artists.

A man named Sarkis Parajanyan was a great successful artist. Born on January 9, 1924 Sarkis studied to become a film director and in 1945 he entered the directing program at the VGIK (under Igor Savchenko). Then in 1959 he directed his first solo film "The Top Guy." He continued to make films for many years and was granted dozens of prestigious international awards. Sarkis Parajanyan also made ceramics, dolls, figures, assemblages, and paintings. He was a extremely original artist, no one had ever seen anything like Parajanyan. Sarkis Parajanyan died on July 20, 1990 in Yerevan. At the time of his death the well known Italian director Federico Fellini said "With Parajanyan's death the world of cinema has lost one of its magicians".

On a personal note this trip has given me a greater appreciation of part of my heritage and has inspired me to continue to pursue my career as an artist.



Last Thoughts...

by Robby Hogle



It is almost obvious that your view on life will be changed after living in any foreign country for three weeks, but it isn't always the drastic difference of poverty and wealth; it doesn't necessarily have to be the colossal skyscrapers or mud huts. It is the little boy that walks by and gives you a wink. It is the stray dog named Jenko that everyone helps feed. It is all of the little things that alter your life. Some of my most vivid memories are the seemingly little experiences that fall into the above category. For example, as I sat down at my desk to log online through my home computer that flashed as many images in one second as it takes a computer in Armenia an hour; I opened my e-mail in hopes of finding something besides the daily spam. I was overjoyed when I discovered an e-mail from Sona, one of my close Armenian friends. She labeled the e-mail as "hi Rob." When I read that subject line I heard her voice perfectly in my head as it resonated between my ears for those sweet couple of seconds; her tone of voice as she said the latter part of her sentence in a lower pitch, her accent that prevented her from fully pronouncing the "b" and the always smiling face that came with the short phrase. She might as well have been standing next to me right now voicing those words. Why was this moment such a vivid and authentic memory? Because that is how she greeted me every day. For me, that is Armenia. When I played the CD that Ani, my most generous host sister, had given to me as a present, the melodic chords of Armenian music reached my ears and I remembered.

I remembered the awkwardness I felt at first to get up and dance. I remembered the internal beat that pounded in my head whenever this type of music came on. I remembered the girls pulling my arms to get up and dance with them. I remembered this all within the first milliseconds of me hearing that music, and although it tormented my mind with these painfully wonderful memories I was allured by its sound. I wanted to hear these old songs and remember the good times. I wanted to sit back and listen, thinking of the possible good times in the future. Although this music torments my mind with these daunting memories of all the wonderful moments in Armenia, I will continue to listen to the beautiful chords of music so that I will not forget my desire to return.

I was most impressed with the Armenian girls during this trip. There is the type like Kiso; she is like a sister to me in Armenia, who is fun to joke around with, and has a dynamite personality. There is also the kind like Sona, a cute intelligent girl who will always stand by your side; she is the best type of friend one could ask for. Lastly, many of the girls are extremely beautiful; they taunt you with their smile, and lure you in with their accent.

Based on my experience in Armenia, the overwhelming majority of girls that I met were wonderfully generous and friendly people. Rarely did I observe an aggressive, self-impressed, forward girl; this type of girl usually does not get far in Armenia because they are looked down upon by their society.

The boys in Armenia are also wonderful, but very different from American men. Although they do care about their women, in my opinion they do not treat them very fairly based on American standards. They are very jealous, over-protective, and they do not trust women in the least. If a girl goes anywhere without her boyfriend, he calls her cell phone every five minutes. Hanging out with any other guy is strictly forbidden, and if the boyfriend is not around she would rarely be allowed to hang out with her girlfriends. It basically portrays a very jealous American boyfriend. However, the relationship between two guys is very different from the states. When they say hello they greet each other with a kiss on the cheek, and when they stroll down the street they link arms. This is not in a homosexual way at all, simply a way of saying we're friends. They all have a very close relationship with each other and they treated me as a friend as well. It was amazing how close I was able to become with the native Armenian boys like David, Diko, and Norro despite the language barrier.

Am I upset about leaving Armenia already and returning to what I consider a routine schedule? No. Although I miss it terribly, I yearn to return to the high and dry lands of what I consider a second home. Someone once told me you always want to leave a place wanting to return. For the moment, I plan on not only returning to this charming country, but living there for part of the year, and possibly starting up a business in the future. It is the nuances of Armenia, its people, and its culture that are responsible for my desire to return.



My First Impressions of Armenia

by Alex Deranian

Driving home from the airport I saw the dilapidated buildings and streets. It was kinda weird at first but I quickly adjusted. We went to school 65 and danced to Armenian music. I thought the Armenians were very friendly and warm, they wanted everyone to dance and have a good time. My first impression of the city was I thought it was pretty nice. Republic Square was a nice area and the markets were kind of scary but also really interesting. The Armenian countryside is really what caught my eye, it was so beautiful. My first impression of my home stay house was it was pretty small but cozy at the same time. The family couldn't speak English but they were still very warm and inviting. The stray dogs roaming the streets made me think it was a dangerous area but it wasn't really. I thought Mount Ararat was really amazing as well.

Journal Entry

by Sara Hartunian-Credit

After a hectic and chaotic morning full of mini-buses, extreme heat, and no clear plan for the day, we were eventually picked up by Henric, who had been out getting the back window fixed after the accident last night. We started our long, sweaty, exhausting bus ride to Anna's village home, and despite the stuffy bus air and painfully bumpy ride, I was actually feeling excited about the journey. It was a chance to experience life outside of the city. Our first stop was at a farm house where we donated a box full of chickens for a needy family. Following a brief presentation to the family, along with our hilarious attempts to hold the baby chickens and Nick's futile attempt to wipe chicken pee from his hand, we once again piled onto our bus. I was anxious to get to Anna's for a few reasons. Other than just being ready to get out of the bus, all I had been hearing about from Anna was how much food her mother was making, so naturally I was excited to eat! Knowing the amount of food that awaited us definitely made the ride worth it. We piled off the bus, and I immediately realized that I was stepping into an entirely new environment, as well as a lifestyle completely different from my own. Elly and I set out to explore the area. We noticed the dirt roads, the cows, the backyard outhouse, the piles of packed, cow poop, which Joanne explained was a way to heat homes in the winter, and the breathtaking mountains and landscapes all around us.

I was interested to learn about village life and excited to have a taste of it, too. One of the best things about the day was when we were shown how they make lavash. It was so amazing to see the process and the work that was put into making the delicious bread. It made me think about home and how at Star Market, I have bought lavash packed in a commercial bag that doesn't really taste that great. But, after tasting the fresh, handmade, right-out-of-the-oven lavash, I knew then that the store brand was not even in the same league. After relishing the taste of the fresh bread, we were told that dinner was ready. Dinner was an amazing set-up in the field across from the house, and it included great food with lots of meat and fresh lavash!!



The highlight of my trip took place after dinner. Joanne suggested that we take a walk through the village and pass out some gifts to the village children, which turned out to be one of the most rewarding experiences of my life. Nick, Julian, Alexandra, Julia, Vicka and myself set out with a bag full of stuffed animals in search of children. The outlook was a bit grim at first, because the roads seemed to be pretty much deserted, except for a few people. We asked people we could find about children in the area and even gave an old woman sitting by the road a small bunny rabbit.

We gave a stuffed animal to a little boy and a little girl, and we gave stuffed animals to two small girls, as well. We really couldn't find many people, so we began to head back to Anna's, not feeling like we accomplished much and still having a few animals left. Just then, a man came up to us who said he had children and wanted us to come with him to his house. I will admit that we were all a bit sketched-out by this random man, but Vicka, who was translating, said it would be fine. We went into his backyard where he explained that we had given his daughter a present, but that he had other daughters who were not home. He was so friendly and kept insisting to repay us for our generosity. He wanted to give us food and drink and talk with us. His wife brought out chairs and the entire family came out to thank us. We weren't really sure what to do, because we didn't have enough animals left for all their children. We also were not sure if Joanne would have wanted us to go into their home. We felt bad that we didn't have enough with us and asked Vicka to explain that if they wanted to come with us back to Anna's, there might be more gifts. We started back towards Anna's with our new friends, who did not stop praising us and smiling and hugging us. We then started to see more and more children coming out of their homes, which made us anxious.

Word had spread throughout the village about the strangers who were passing out gifts, and now, the once deserted street began to fill with people of all ages. As we turned the corner, the six of us were greeted by about 12 adults and about 15 children. We had no clue what to do. We were out of gifts and weren't sure if we should bring all these children back to Anna's, because we were apprehensive that there would be no more gifts. As we approached the group of people, we were immediately hugged, kissed and patted on the back. We only had Vicka to translate, who tried her best to explain what everyone was saying. We had Julian run back to Anna's to see if there were any other gifts to pass out, while Vicka explained who we were and what we were doing in Armenia. After about ten minutes of waiting for Julian, we sent Nick to go find out if anyone was coming. As we waited, the people asked us to tell them about our interests and our family. The entire group was silent, as we told them our backgrounds. They kept insisting on giving us food and drink and kept pulling us towards their homes. It was such a heartwarming and touching moment to have people who had so little offer us so much. I was concerned to learn, however, that another group had set off in the other direction with the rest of the gifts. All that was left to pass out were pencils and pens. I was initially upset that these were all we had to offer, but when I saw the children's faces light up, even though they were just being given pencils, I felt better. I have never experienced such warmth, hospitality, and gratefulness. We were complete strangers, yet we were treated like the oldest of friends.

At first, it was upsetting to think that people lived in not the best of conditions, seemingly in the middle of nowhere. It made me sad to see children running around in ripped clothes, some without shoes, with not much to do, and barely any toys to play with. I realized that although the people did not have much, they were still able to laugh, give thanks, and enjoy family and friends. I am glad to have met the people I did today. I have been greatly changed and will never forget the warmth and enthusiasm received from the village people. The experience opened my eyes to life in a rural setting, in a less developed country, away from abundant shopping malls and super markets, in a struggling economy with limited opportunities, and away from the hustle and bustle of crowds, cars and convenient, modern amenities. Life here was simple, basic, and focused on survival, not unnecessary accessories, but even in the midst of having next to nothing materially, the spirits and connections of the people and families were thriving.

Armenia Speech

by Chris Albano

Hello everyone. As you are aware, I have just returned from a three-week trip to Armenia. It was amazing, we saw sites, and did things that I didn't think possible, such as live for three weeks on vegetables. While I was there, I was looking mainly at their culture, and I noticed how deep it is. It gets its depth by staying true to its beginnings, yet at the same time adapting to the new age. I managed to ask several Armenians my focus questions, which was good, but a lot of them had the same answers. I found that there are Armenian stereotypes about themselves, and they usually go along the lines of being kind and hospitable. The truth of these stereotypes obviously varies from person to person as they are applied, but as a population I found that they are generally true. Another question of mine was what other people thought of Armenians. They think that they are seen as a proud race. Their culture is great, but as of now they are not a major power in the world and are therefore paid little mind. As to what the world thinks of Americans, they aren't sure, and I would guess neither is the world after the Iraq war. My next focus question had to do with what was socially acceptable for teenagers in Armenia. That phrase didn't translate well, so I am thankful, it could be observed without inquisition. To be a socially acceptable Armenian teenager, you have to be right on top of music and fashion. You need to dress well, but it doesn't matter if you only have 3 outfits. So, basically, social acceptance is the same as in the US in most ways. It is, however, interesting that the kids are underexposed. Granted, this depends on their parents, but for the most part, there is very little sex and violence that the teenagers see. The parents censor it outright. This puts a clamp on what they know, but aside from that there is very little distinction between Armenian teens and American teens.

On a similar note of Armenians and American sharing common ground, contemporary music is very popular in Armenia. Drawing from the solid base of traditional Armenian music, which has stayed relatively solid throughout history, it seems that contemporary Armenian music has become a mix of American music with traditional Armenian instruments, like the Duduk, creating a style of music that Armenia can really call its own. Finally, when I asked people if going to America had changed their views of their culture and ours, they said no, it didn't because they knew what to expect in America, so nothing took them by surprise enough to change their standpoints on their or our culture. This makes sense because the countries are very similar on a societal level.

In Armenia, there are some issues of gender equality embedded in their culture. Women have been given equal rights as men, but because of the ancient ideal of the masculine dominated society, women remain somewhat oppressed, and still today are having trouble finding their voice. I found that there aren't too many racial equality issues in Armenia, however, as 98% Armenia's population is Armenian, meaning there is also a large Christian majority. Since there are few minority groups in Armenia, there is little of any other population living there. There are very few issues of racial and religious equality. However when I asked what would happen to their culture and society if minority groups were to enter the country, I got many puzzled looks.

When I finally did get an answer out of someone, it was grim. She said that they would learn to coexist somehow, but it would be a long hard path. Armenia is not a place for minority groups, because though Armenians are hospitable towards guests, it would be hard to become an established minority without being oppressed.

When I asked one woman what her favorite part of her culture was, she responded that her favorite part of the culture was the religious aspects. They are the deepest and most unique things that Armenians have.

She said that it was a truly great thing that all Armenians were united under Christianity. She said that there were no aspects of Armenian culture that she disliked, and that they were all good. She did say, however, that the government should coexist with the culture more, instead of stifling it.

On the same note, most of the holidays in the country are Christian based holidays, like Christmas, Easter, and Valentine's Day. There is one other holiday that celebrates water on July 15, but other than that, there are very few secular holidays. And according to the woman I interviewed, it is that Christianity that is the most unique aspect of Armenia's culture because no other country shares that kind of unity among its people, and that is what makes Armenia great.

Because of all of these reasons, Armenia is a cultural hub, like a trade post built on ancient ruins, with new ideas coming and going, but having the old foundations always there for you. The trip was culturally rich, and I am so thankful that I was able to witness this amazing culture first hand.

Armenian Journal

by Ben Dewart



Today, we went to the oldest Christian church in the world. It was built in 301 A.D. on top of a pagan fire worshipping pit. The church had a museum which held very important items. Kept in the church, was piece of Noah's Ark. Additionally, it held the Roman sword which pierced Jesus Christ. The museum had other possessions such as five hundred year-old robes of men in the Armenian Church. Afterward, we went to Vernasage, a market towards Yerevan's center. This market reflected Yerevan in some ways; it was half full of souvenirs and half full of items like mechanical parts for regular Armenians. I have noticed Tatevik always trying to see what I like in order to buy me it. She wants to be extremely hospitable. From Vernasage, we went to a dance by young children. They went for 45 minutes without a mistake. Large changes from here and Boston are the fires; people set brush fires all over either for better soil or to prevent bigger fires. It seemed so strange an event though it made perfect sense. The cars are also noticeable because there are no laws to prosecute drivers who hit pedestrians.