

Կամավորի Ձայնը

Voice of the Volunteer



Յունիս 2018

Կամավորի Չայնը

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Homenetmen of New Jersey Scouts Meet Artsakh War Hero Major Sargis Stepanyan By: Tamar Samuelian



The Homenetmen scouts with Major Stepanyan (Photo: Homenetmen N.J.)

RIDGEFIELD, N.J. (A.W.)—The Homenetmen of New Jersey Scouts had the honor of meeting with Major Sargis Stepanyan and his wife Armine on April 21. A triple amputee, Artsakh war hero, arm wrestling champion, and a real inspiration, Stepanyan spoke openly to the scouts about his journey through sports and later as a soldier in the Armenian Army in Artsakh.

As a child, he loved sports and was always active. He took all types of martial arts classes: Karate, Ju Jitsu, and Tai Kwon Do, in addition to weightlifting classes. In 2007, he began his service in the army. He was deployed to Artsakh, where he worked within a specialized unit. In 2014, Major Sargis was on duty during one of Azerbaijan's violations of the ceasefire along the Artsakh border, he jumped into action to save a wounded soldier's life. In the process, a mine exploded, causing him heavy injuries and the loss of both his legs and an arm. He was immediately rushed to hospital. How he survived after such an explosion is a puzzle to many—when asked, he says “Park Asdudzo” (“With the help of God.”)



The Homenetmen scouts with Major Stepanyan (Photo: Homenetmen N.J.)

Following the healing of his injuries and the amputation of his legs and arm, Major Stepanyan decided to engage in various sports to aid not only his mental recovery but his physical recovery as well. He used sports to reacclimate himself to daily life. During his rehabilitation, he found that he was good at arm wrestling and began training to compete on an international level. With the financial support of the Armenian Wounded Heroes Fund, Major Stepanyan trained intensively. In 2017, he reached his goal and won two gold and one silver medals at the World Arm Wrestling Championship.

Major Stepanyan arm wrestled with the Homenetmen Scouts (Photo: Homenetmen N.J.)

Major Stepanyan continues to work towards Armenia's progress in his professional military capacity. Every day he puts on his army uniform and goes to work at the Ministry of Defense. As



a member of the Armenian Wounded Heroes Fund, he regularly and tirelessly meets with other wounded soldiers. In doing so, he provides much needed encouragement and inspiration to these soldiers and their families.

Major Stepanyan, with his calm, modest demeanor, and his friendly personality, is an inspiration to all. In defense of his country and fellow soldiers, he endured heavy injuries, but his love and commitment to Armenia and Artsakh have not wavered—he valiantly continues to serve Armenia and Armenians.



Major Stepanyan arm wrestled with the Homenetmen Scouts (Photo: Homenetmen N.J.)

As an honorable soldier and human being, Major Stepanyan teaches us tenacity, diligence, dedication, and faith. No matter how many times we fall, we must get back up and continue to live and fight for our beliefs. No matter the magnitude of the challenges we face, we should continue to find ways to conquer our fears and to persevere both as individuals

and within the Armenian Cause.

Support the Armenian Wounded Heroes fund to help all Armenian soldiers like Major Stepanyan. Learn more at: <https://armenianwoundedheroes.com/>

AYF-YOARF Junior Seminar Recap
By: Kaliana Maronian Florida “Arev” Chapter

Year after year, hundreds of members gather on Memorial Day Weekend for AYF-YOARF Junior Seminar. This Memorial Day Weekend, over 400 juniors and seniors came together at a new location, Camp Kweebec in Schwenksville, PA for another fun-filled and educational weekend. Lectures and activities were centered around this year’s theme of “Inspire Our Youth, Empower Our Leaders: Աշխուժացնենք Մեր Պատանիները, Հզորացնենք Մեր Առաջնորդները.”



Educational lectures were given by Armenian Revolutionary Federation (ARF) members, AYF alumni, and community members all in an effort to further educate the AYF-YOARF’s Junior membership on how to use their strengths to successfully be a leader.

On Friday, members arrived by the busloads and settled into their cabins. During the night activity, each chapter was assigned a theme, such as “Armenian Uber Driver” or “Armenian vs. American Scenarios,” and performed a skit conveying that.

On Saturday, participants split up into their lecture groups and participated in an educational program put together by the Junior Seminar Committee. The series of lectures included the following topics: Youth Leaders (unger Anto Avedissian), Progression of the Armenian Government (unger Dikran Khaligian), Armenian Women on the Front Lines (ungerouhi Yeghisapet Chouldjian), History of the AYF-YOARF (unger Ara Surenian), History of the

Independence (unger Zohrab Khaligian), ARF's Role Then and Now (unger Greg Bedian), Leadership Roles in the AYF Now (unger Phil Nigon), Hidden Leaders (unger George Aghjayan), and Leadership Through the Armenian Weekly (ungerouhi Karine Vann).

"Seminar was a fun experience with a lot of engaging lectures and opportunities to make new friends." said first-timer ungerouhi Alidz Karakachian, Manhattan.

Another first-timer, ungerouhi Lori Sakayan explained, "I really liked the lectures because they were really interesting and they weren't just a boring thing. I also got to meet a bunch of people, both old and young."

Twenty-four 17-year-old AYF members took part in their own lecture series, the Leaders In Training (LIT) Program, which emphasizes the importance of leadership skills and applying those skills as seniors in AYF. The LITs were directed by AYF alumnus and former CE Chairman, unger Raffi Hovagimian and AYF alumnus and former Junior Seminar Committee (JSC) member, ungerouhi Tsoler Avedissian.

The Saturday night activity consisted of a secret Escape Room Game, in which juniors were split into groups and had to collaborate to escape a "locked" room. Following the game, everyone came together to commemorate the 100th Anniversary of the First Independence of the Armenian Republic with inspiring remarks given by ungerouhi Meghri Dervartanian, followed by the singing of "Sardarabad."

After a second day of lectures for each of the groups, the weekend came to a close on Sunday night with the highly anticipated dance. All members joined together to dance and *shourchbar* to live Armenian music by unger Alek Surenian, unger Datev Gevorkian, and ungerouhi Beiyra Chaparian. This was followed by junior and senior members coming together to proudly sing revolutionary songs late into the night.



First-timer ungerouhi Sirahn Toufayan from New Jersey mentioned that "Seminar was a good chance to meet new people from other chapters which wouldn't happen if you stick to your own friends and only stayed with them. You also learn much that you didn't know before. It helps to get in touch with our Armenian side." Sirahn, along with 85 other first time attendees, were able to go to Seminar for free this year, thanks to a grant from the Armenian Youth Foundation.

Juniors and Seniors alike left Junior Seminar prepared to apply their unique skills in any future leadership position they may find themselves in. Inspire Our Youth, Empower Our Leaders:
Աշխուժացնենք Մեր Պատանիները, Հզորացնենք Մեր Առաջնորդները





Մայիս 28, 1918

By: Meghri Dervartanian Boston “Nejdeh” Chapter/ Boston Homenetmen

Ազգերու պատմութեան մէջ գոյութիւն ունին հանգրուաններ, որոնք եղած են ճակատագրական, եւ որոշած են ժողովուրդի մը գոյուղիւնը եւ գոյատեւումը:

1918-ը հայ ժողովուրդին համար եղաւ բախտարոշ տարի, երբ Նոյն թուականի՝ Մայիս 28-ին, Մայիսեան հերոսական հերոսամարտերէն ետք, հռչակուեցաւ Հայաստանի Առաջին Հանրապետութիւնը, պարտութեան մատնելէ ետք արիւննարբու թուրքին, Սարդարապատի, Բաշ Ապարանի, եւ Ղարաբաղի մէջ:

Հայ ժողովուրդին համար, Մայիս 28-ը Նոր կեանքի սքիզք է: Տեղասպանութիւն տեսած ժողովուրդը, 1918 թուականին կրցաւ ինքնակազմակերպուիլ եւ ստեղծել պետութիւն: Հայ ժողովուրդը վաստակեց աշխարհի ապրելու իրաւունքը:

Այսօր, երբ ամբողջ հայութիւնը Հայաստանի եւ սփիւռքի տարածքին կը նշէ Հայաստանի Առաջին Հանրապետութեան 100 ամեակը, անգամ մը եւս կ'ուզայ յիշեցնել ամբողջ աշխարհին, թէ հայը հպարտ է իր անցեալով, ներկայով եւ ապագայի նուաճումներով:

Իսկ մենք, աշխարհացրիւ հայերս միշտ կը յիշենք Մայիսեան յաղթանակները եւ անոնց հերոսները որոնք ապահովեցին մեր ժողովուրդի եւ հայրենիքի գոյութիւնը, Վկայ ազատ անկախ Հայաստանը, Վկայ Արցախի անկախ հանրապետութիւնը, Վկայ սփիւռքի մէջ ապրող, սակայն հայրենիքով շնչող ու գործող հայ ազգը:

Փառք ու պատիւ անցեալի եւ ներկայի անմահ հերոսներուն: Փառք քեզ Հայաստան, դու վերածնունդ հայրենիք հայոց:

Մեղրի Տերփարդանեան Հայ Երիտասարդաց Դաշնակցութեան Պոստոն «Նժտեհ» մասնաճիւղի անդամ:

AYF-YOARF Junior Seminar 2018
By: Sarine Meguerditchian Boston “Nejdeh” Chapter

AYF-YOARF Junior Seminar 2018 was a time where AYF Junior members were able to see friends they had not seen in months, maybe years, form new relationships and friendships that would last a lifetime, and also learn new, interesting facts about Armenian culture and history they might not have known before. From the bus breaking down on the way there, to the lectures that were given, everybody was able to learn something, and take home memories from the weekend.

On the Friday on the way to seminar, everybody was excited and eager to get to the camp, especially because this year, there was a new location, and that in less than 12 hours, we would be seeing our friends for the first time in a while. The bus breaking down was maybe a toll at the time, but it just added the memories that I will take with me from that weekend. When we finally got there, we were amazed by this new place! The camp itself was large, and the cabins were well set up. Also, this year, seminar had the largest turn out, and to be surrounded by so many juniors from around the country was extremely astonishing. That night, the activity was Talent Show. Different chapters went up and performed skits they had prepared. To see how each chapter had taken the time to come up with ways to present topics they had been assigned was extremely creative, and it let people express themselves in front of their peers. That first night, I went to bed already creating new friendships, and growing old ones. I was tired, but also excited for the lectures in the following day to come.



Saturday, being extremely hot and sunny, brought much discomfort to the juniors, as well as the seniors, but the lectures taught me things I did not know before, and important lessons I should know, and will take with me for the rest of my life. For starters, learning about Armenian women and their role in the Armenian independence, as well as the Armenian heritage, was truly inspiring. I learned about women fighting in the front lines during the war, how women worked as nurses during war, and brought food to the men fighting, how Armenia was the first country to let women vote in 1919, and how, after the first republic of Armenia was formed, there were three women on Parliament. This made me proud to be an Armenian woman, specifically, and motivated me to, both now and in the future, work hard to help my Armenian heritage, culture, as well Armenia itself. Along with that I learned about the three different republics, current governmental conflicts happening in Armenia, and the history of both the ARF and the AYF. All this inspired me to work harder in the AYF, and to see what type of a leader I can be to help out my chapter, as well as areas outside of my chapter- to help my race and my country. Saturday's lectures left me feeling inspired to be a better Armenian, and also bring more recognition to powerful Armenian women specifically.



Sunday was chilly and rainy, but the lectures were just as eye opening as the day before. At this point, I was close with my cabinmates, and was sad about the fact that I would be leaving all of them the following morning. However, I knew that someday soon, we would all be

reconnected again. One lecture that stood out to me was Unger George Aghjayan's, he had traveled not only to Armenia but also Western Armenia multiple times, and had taken pictures of places, faces, and explained stories that were memorable. The DNA test that he also took to track down his family was very cool. This just made me feel like I wanted to take a trip to Armenia, and hear stories from different families, people, even people who did not they were Armenians, and learn about my family history, along with other diasporan Armenians. Sunday night, the dance, was extremely fun but also sad knowing that I had to say goodbye to all my friends, and my cabin mates whom I had grown so close to. However, I knew that when I got back to the "real world", I would be able to use new lessons I learned to my advantage, and help out my Armenian community as well as educate others of the things that I had learned.



Junior Seminar 2018 will be something that I will never forget, and the new things that I have learned will be things I will try to spread as well as use to my advantage. The theme of the weekend was inspiring our youth, and empowering our leaders, and I can say that the AYF-YOARF Juniors as a youth group, left seminar inspired. We will use seminar to push us forward, and carry us to be effective members of the AYF and Armenian community as a whole.

Pan-Homenetmen Jamboree 3rd Preparatory Scout Seminar
By: K. Jaqueline Minassian



On June 8th, 2018, the Homenetmen Eastern Region Scouts held their third and final seminar in preparation for the Pan-Homenetmen Jamboree this summer. The seminar was held in Franklin, Massachusetts at AYF Camp Haiastan. In attendance were the selected scouts attending Armenia this summer from the Boston, New Jersey, D.C., Chicago, Philadelphia, and Providence Chapters.

The seminar did more than just prepare us, it instilled in us the excitement for our upcoming trip. The seminar consisted of activities, games and a lecture given by Y. George Barmakian, about what it means to be a scout and the leadership skills that every scout needs to find within themselves. I truly believe the East Coast is ready to take on this trip and prove to everyone how strong and united we are. When I think of who we are, the first word that comes to mind is family and I couldn't be more thrilled to be traveling to the motherland with my brothers and sisters. This will be a once in a lifetime experience and I'm beyond thankful to have the chance to part take in it.

The last four years as a scout has changed my life and has shaped the person I am today. Being around people who are so passionate about our youth and the Armenian culture is so refreshing and motivating. Having the opportunity to travel to Armenia this summer will be unforgettable, knowing that I'll be with Armenians from all over the world gives me a sense of curiosity of what they are like. I can't wait to explore and learn about the other counties, and how they will represent and celebrate unity. I am mostly excited about learning new dances and singing new songs. What I can bring to the table on this trip is my positivity and my compassion. I can't wait for my love to grow when I travel to my beautiful homeland.

The Homenetmen chapter of Boston is one of the biggest chapters; I'm so proud to be a part of it and show everyone how smart and educated each and everyone of us are. William Saroyan once said "It is simply in the nature of Armenian to study, to learn, to question, to

speculate, to discover, to invent, to revise, to restore, to preserve, to make, and to give.” This quote emphasizes how powerful our culture is and truly hits home for me because of how much we have to offer in this world. Us Armenians will never be divided and will always help shape the world. Nobody will stop us from growing and becoming a new Armenia.

Next stop, HAYASDAN!



My Trip to Armenia

By: Garo Tashian AYF Providence “Varantian” & Providence Homenetmen

Last week I embarked on a trip to Armenia that was much different than any I have taken in the past. This year I had the honor of being there to celebrate the momentous occasion of the 100th Anniversary of the First Republic of Armenia, as well as making my very first trip to the Republic of Artsakh.

Upon arriving in Armenia, I could clearly sense a new feeling of hope that was in the air. I walked off of the plane, through customs, gathered my bags and met my driver whose first words to me after greeting us were “kez yev indz shnorhavor” (Congratulations to you and me!). He was of course referring to the Velvet Revolution that had taken place a short few weeks ago. It was truly inspiring to hear the excitement in his voice as he was discussing this and how much hope he had for a brighter future for our country.

Throughout my trip, this sense of hope was presented time and time again by the people of Armenia, children, youth and elderly alike. Everywhere I went, I would hear the words “Mishd Houys Ga” (there is always hope), which was a big change from what I would hear during past trips and this truly was heartwarming.

The celebrations and commemoration started on May 27th with trips to Abaran and Vanadzor. With Armenian and ARF flags held high, we began marching through the village of Abaran to the monument dedicated to the Battle of Bash-Abaran. A march that was full of singing and celebration, but most importantly comradery. We then paid tribute to the Battle of Gharakilisa by visiting the monument dedicated to it in Vanadzor (previously Gharakilisa), where several youth took their lifelong oath to join the ARF ranks in front of a massive crowd.



AYF-YOARF Eastern Region Members in Abaran, Armenia

On the day of the 100 year anniversary of May 28th, a trip to the Sardarabad memorial was organized. Men carrying their children, women, elderly, all walked for miles to get to the site of the battle of Sardarabad to pay respect of this momentous battle that secured the First

Republic of Armenia's independence in 1918. The pride the people of Armenia and diaspora had that day was unwavering.



AYF-YOARF Eastern Region Members at Sardarabad

The following night, there was a dinner-dance organized by the Javakhk committee as a tribute to Javakhk and our thriving communities there, themed “Tebi Yergir Javakhk”. The event was held at Paravon Restaurant and was attended by over 800. Armenian cultural and revolutionary songs were playing all night as ungers from all over the world sang and danced together to celebrate Javakhk, Armenia, and Artsakh.

During these celebrations, I was fortunate enough to meet many ungers from around the world, as well as participate with my fellow ungers from the AYF-YOARF Eastern Region, all of us there to celebrate the accomplishments of the ARF 100 years ago and to ensure that the next 100 years are even stronger than those past.

My trip to Artsakh was an experience hard to put into words, something unlike others in the past. I began my journey early one morning with a group of family and friends. Our trip consisted of many stops in Armenia on the way to Artsakh, which were filled with uncanny scenery such as the breathtaking views from the Wings of Tatev, Tatev Monastery, and Jermuk waterfall.

Our arrival to Shushi was not met with ease, having gotten a flat tire in Goris (city in Armenia right on the border of Artsakh). Though a flat tire may seem like a problem for most, for us it became a great start to our time in Artsakh. Having reached Perttsor (first village over the border in Artsakh) on a spare tire, we were met by many friends and villagers who were eagerly awaiting our arrival, armed with a set of brand new tires for us. Our driver, a gamavor (volunteer) in Artsakh, just had to make one phone call to a friend along the way and you could really see the outpour of support we received upon our arrival. Once our tires were changed, we received an escort by a few Kharabaghtsis to our hotel in Shushi to ensure nothing else would go wrong.

Our stay in Shushi consisted of visiting the Ghazanchetsots Cathedral, the Shushi fortress, and the Jdrduz canyon, where the battles for the liberation of Shushi took place. Standing on the edge of the canyon, you could almost hear the voices of our fedayis echoing through the mountains...



Jdrduz Canyon, Shushi, Artsakh

We embarked to Stepanakert, where our first stop was the ARF agoump (office). Here we were welcomed by a few ungers who were excited for our visit and eager to show us around the building and even city.

Stepanakert was a smaller version of Yerevan. A quickly developing city, full of clean streets and great people, who love their land and those who love their land.

Our next stops were solemn visits to the museums dedicated to the Fallen and Missing Soldiers. Both were full of pictures and mementos left by various soldiers during the Artsakh liberation movement starting in 1988, as well as the Four Day War in 2016. Both had heartbreaking stories of soldiers who sacrificed their lives for our cause or whose whereabouts are unknown to this day.

One of the most heartbreaking stories came from the Museum of Missing Soldiers, told firsthand by a mother who had recently overheard a conversation among a few men in Artsakh that led her to discover the location of her missing son. Her son was captured and made prisoner by the Azeris during the war in the early 1990s. He was then sold to Turkey, where he is currently being held prisoner along with two other Armenian soldiers. His mother has opened a lawsuit against Turkey to try and get her son back, a son whom she hasn't seen in over 25 year but tirelessly fights for day in and day out. She visited the prison but unfortunately was

unable to see her son, she states that she kissed every part of the surrounding wall with hopes her son was on the other side somehow feeling her presence.

One of the most interesting parts of our trip was to Tikranagert where it was not the site of the fortress there that stunned us, but rather the Artsakh gamavors along the way, who were holding sessions of practice, just 10 minutes from the frontlines. The sense of honor that we felt to be able to be so close to the men and women who are protecting our homeland was unlike any other.

This trip was truly unbelievable. The feelings of love, honor and hope that I have for Artsakh have been immeasurably strengthened and can never be broken. The people there are inspiring and strong, the land beautiful and ours. My hope for anyone traveling to Armenia is to also pay a visit to Artsakh to gain a deeper understanding of why we continue the struggle for keeping our Republics, Armenia and Artsakh, free and independent for life. For those who cannot make the trip or who have already, begin and continue instilling the passion and knowledge of the past 100 years of Armenia and the past 30 years of our Artsakh struggle to the future, to ensure a continued love and understanding exists in future generations.

If you would like to submit any articles for the Gamavori Tsaynuh, please contact us at prc.eusa@homenetmen.org or pr@ayf.org

Articles must be submitted by the 20th of the month.

SAVE THE DATES

Homenetmen 28th Navasartian Games June 30th - July 4th Washington DC

<https://www.navasartianeusa.com>

85th Anniversary Gala of the AYF-YOARF July 21st Warwick, Rhode Island

<http://ayfgala.org>

AYF-YOARF Annual Picnic July 22nd Camp Haiastan

84th AYF-YOARF Olympics August 30th - September 3rd 2018 Philadelphia

<https://ayfolympics.org/>

AYF-YOARF Senior Seminar September 28- 30 Camp Haiastan

<https://www.facebook.com/events/1743522589064901/>

