AYF Olympics Special Issue

Providence Answers Another AYF Olympic Call

BY TOM VARTABEDIAN

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

In what was expected to be a three-team race, the suspense was there as all 3 battled it out to the very end before the "Varantians" prevailed with 176 points. Host "Greater Boston" settled for second with 145 points after sweeping both pentathlons at the end to overtake Philly. The "Sebouhs" finished a credible third with 124 points.

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

Fifth place went to New Jersey with 39 points, followed by the Hagopian-led Granite City team with 23, and Worcester with 20. The "Arams" took home the Most Improved Award. Chapter membership last prevailed in 2009 at 7,300 points over their fabled history.

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

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

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

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

Greater Boston showed up with 50 athletes and was expected to pose a threat. The "Nejdehs" did just that as the lead threathed throughout the afternoon. Philly wasn't to be denied either, with enough brown in the lineup to make it interesting.

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

But it was too little-too late for the "Nejdehs" to close the deficit, despite the flurry of points at the end. For Providence, this marked the 39th championship in chapter history, dating back to 1934 when the games were officially launched. The only other chapter in double figures is Detroit with 14 titles. Meanwhile, the "Varantians" have racked up more than 7,300 points over their ballyed history.

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

Wasn't it just two years ago that Philly bounced back with a vengeance, scoring 296.5 points? And beat Providence by 175 points! It's been that kind of an Olympic trade-off the past few years and destined to get better, given the rise of stellar athletes in the various chapters.

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

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

There were five high scorers with 15 points apiece. Three of them hailed from Providence: Greg Hamalian (2,080), Stephen Tutunjian (long jump, triple jump, and high jump), and Lynne Tutunjian (long jump, triple jump, and high jump, and Lynne Tutunjian (long jump, triple jump, and high jump, and Lynne Tutunjian (long jump, high jump, and 25 butterfly). They were joined by Granite City's Michelle Hagopian (gold, discus, and baseball throw), who remained undefeated in her seventh year, and Philly's Mike Kasian (50 butterfly, 50 freestyle, and 100 freestyle).

In what was a banner year for records, no fewer than six were set. Astor Guzman was recognized for his overwhelming community and church service by accepting the Varadian Spirit Award. A word of gratitude to Mark Alashan for keeping the announcements going throughout the day while keeping the stadium informed and updated.
WATERTOWN, Mass.—The 2012 AYF Olympics hosted by the Greater Boston "Nejdeh" Chapter was a huge success due to the dedication of a supportive community. The Steering Committee would like to thank many people that contributed to this year’s event. First, we would like to thank all of the local AYF alumni who helped man the ticket booths, concession stands, medical tents, welcoming desks, and stop watches. The Steering Committee also appreciates the hours of work from the committee chairs and members who worked closely with the Steering Committee to plan a packed weekend. We would also like to thank the management at our venue provider, the Westin Boston Waterfront Hotel, Newton North High School, President’s Golf Course, Armenian Cultural and Educational Center, and Camp Hayastan.

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

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

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

2012 AYF Olympic Steering Committee:
John Abarakian
Toiler Arslanian
Shant Badirkian
Michael Gazelian
Alan Jelalian
Tamar Kanarian
Nairi Khachatourian
Heather Kraftan
Raffi Varjabedian

79th AYF Olympics Standings and Highlights

BOSTON, Mass. (AW)–The 79th annual AYF Olympics were held Aug. 31-Sept. 3 in Boston, attracting thousands of athletes, parents, AYF alumni, and friends.

Providence emerged victorious with 156 points, with Boston securing the number two spot (145 points), and Philly comfortably holding the number two spot (145 points), and Philly comfortably holding the number three spot (145 points), securing third place.

The 79th AYF Olympics was like a “naked city.” A city that never was within reach of any other city. All you had to do was go and play. It was like being a novice sportswriter for the golden age of manual typewriters. And he had his pen going. It was the golden age of manual typewriters.

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

He handled the track and swimming. I was assigned the tennis and golf. Being a novice sportswriter for the golden age of manual typewriters, I not only wrote but also edited my copy, crude as it’s been at times. My gratitude to you all. The stories and special edition after another, it’s like being a novice sportswriter for the golden age of manual typewriters.

My friends and acquaintances I’ve earned across the country are all reminiscing about the legends of stories that evolved and multiplied from gifted athletes and inspiring heroes who have been my pana-

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

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Opening Ceremonies Touches All Parameters

BY TOM VARTABEDIAN

BOSTON, Mass.—Speeches and other formalities aside, the Opening Ceremonies proved a rather colorful and meaningful introduction to these 79th annual Olympic Games held at the new $220 million Newton North High School.

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

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

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

Avdissian further praised the AYF’s 74-year legacy in its role in preserving the Armenian nation and heritage.

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

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

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

The melodic voice of Sevan Dulgarian was also warmly received. The 17-year-old Bedford High senior enthralled the gathering with her rendition of the national anthems, including all four verses of “Mer Hairenik.”

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Worcester unveiled a dozen athletes for the first time in seven years, led by four Arakian sisters (Talin, Kohar, and twins Nairi and Garineh) and the Charchaflian siblings (Hovig and Knar). A tennis medal Friday put them on the scoreboard.

Bostonians Arax Krafian and Keuor Ourfalian carried the Olympic torch, signaling the official start of the games.
Armenschik Rocks Saturday Night Dance at Olympics

BY MICHELLE HAGOPIAN

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

Andrew Hamalian, known by his stage name Armenschik, is a sensation in Haigast and has traveled the world performing his music. This year, the Boston Olympics Steering Committee decided to bring him in for a new and exciting experience for the weekend’s guests.

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

“We knew the financial responsibilities we had going into this Olympics and with Olympics in Boston and the population of Armenians in the area, we had the opportunity to bring in a ‘new artist’ that would draw all those people to our event. Saturday night of Olympics is not as popular as Sunday, so we wanted to have a new sound to freshen things up a bit,” said Steering Committee member Tamar Kanarian.

“We knew of Armenschik’s popularity when our community center [ACECI] brought him for their first annual Kermesse in 2010. We saw the power of his music, and with thousands of folks that came to see him so we thought about bringing him to the Olympics stage.”

Brian Kanarian, event coordinator and AYF member, said Armenschik’s performance attracted guests that might not have otherwise attended the weekend.

“Once attendance across the board was massive throughout the weekend. We were successful in introducing other Armenians to an AYF Olympic weekend that we have been able to produce for 79 years. Armenschik was great and we’ve heard nothing but great comments of his performance,” Kanarian said.

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

She noted that sometimes it’s difficult to take risks, especially when you have financial obligations to the AYF and the reputation of the weekend. “Ultimately, we consulted with the Governing Body and CK [Central Executive]. We knew we had to work hard to publicize the event and make sure everyone in the Greater Boston Armenian community was aware of this new addition to the weekend,” she said.

People of all ages could be seen on the dance floor singing along to Armenschik’s lyrics. The ballroom was packed from the beginning of the night through the end.

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

Hamalian and Hintlian Dominate Men’s Track

BY TOM VARTABEDIAN

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

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

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

The two were introduced by John Hoogian, who is the field events coach for Holy Cross. John competed in the AYF Olympics in the 1970’s and has seen Bob regularly past the past few years at Patriot League meets. Greg showed an immediate interest in joining with his younger brother Mark. Then they found that an old family friend from their church, Sarkis Varanian, was the chapter president. The "Varantians" expected to have several other entrants in the track event to back off most of them to injuries and conflicts with college schedules. So when the coaches were planning events, Andrew offered to move down to the long sprints to have better coverage over all the events. He did more speed work during the summer with his father’s coaching and hoped for the best on Labor Day weekend.

The first event on the track was the 3,000, and Greg ran a controlled race kicking the final lap to win in 10:47.2. Then came the 800, the only event where he and Andrew overlapped. The race was tightly contested with Armenschik in front of Greater Boston battling both of them all the way. In the end, the finishing sprouts for both “Varantians” won gold and silver with all three runners going under last year’s winning time of 2:10. Andrew was feeling some tightness in the quadriceps of his leg after that race. He stretched it out in time to win the 200 in 24.00 edging out the 300-meter champion, John Santian from New Jersey, who ran 24.12.

After that race Greg was getting ready for the 1,600 and asked his coaches if he could go after the AYF record of 4:36.4, assuming that he would still have enough left for the 4x400 relay. Running by himself, Hamalian broke the 13-year-old record with a 4:32.80. The old record was held by Mike Baskin of New Jersey, who ran for the U.S. Military Academy, another Patriot League team. After more extensive leg stretching, Hintlian came back for the 400 where he again battled Armenschik wire-to-wire before winning in 54.40. After a brief rest, the duo teamed up with Gary Dedukian and Steven Zobian to win the 4x400 relay. Hamalian once again used his strong finishing kick to come from behind and pass Philips and Greater Boston in the final 60 meters. After all was said and done, the duo had won every track event from 200 to 3,200 meters, and had been key members of the winning 4x400 relay.
The Athlete Chris Bohjalian Aspired to Become

By Tom Vartabedian

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

The bestselling author of 15 works, including The Sandcastle Girls, may just have the right formula for success.

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Life is all about perseverance,” he told his listeners. “Slowly, through hard work and endurance, I was able to discard the white shirt for a more respectable color. What I lacked in talent, I made up in determination. I am nothing if not stubborn, as an athlete and as a writer.”

Bohjalian amassed 250 rejection slips before he sold a single word. Four of his books have reached the New York Times Best-Sellers List, and it’s taken the reading community by storm.

An autograph session at Sunday’s Olympic Hall attracted a number of buyers. People were seen throughout the lobby carrying the book or reading it quietly in a remote spot.

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

The whole matter remains quite flattering with the author. He appears to handle the spotlight with a great deal of poise. A national tour that crossed the country, though tiring at times, brought added exposure, along with an overseas junket that was memorable.

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

Astor Guzelian Given AYF Spirit Award

By Tom Vartabedian

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

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

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

Eric and Gail are two other children who carved their own niche in the community, not to mention wife Lucy and a host of other relatives. Putting it succinctly, the Guzelian clan is a work in progress when it comes to fame and accomplishment.

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

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

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

The son of genocide survivors, Guzelian was raised in the Boston area. He joined the Cambridge “Ararat” AYF and later transferred to the Boston Chapter where he met Lucy and a coterie of lifelong companions.

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

Additionally, he worked to establish the St. Stephen’s Elementary School, coached the Junior and Senior Watertown “Gaidz” AFFers, is a fixture at Bingo, and has remained a wealth of knowledge throughout.

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

Astor Guzelian and his grand-children
Olympics Memories

By Mark Gavoor

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

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

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

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

A reader from D.C. wrote an e-mail to the Washington: "First, your wonderful great uncle Rouben Gavoor got our few youngsters back in 1943 to start collecting more from as many people as I could."

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

There is another story about the 1957 Niagara Falls Olympics. This one is from Ned Apigian, who was a charter member of that chapter. He told of how the chapter started in 1956. In their first year, a small group of Niagara Falls AYFers went to the Olympics in Philadelphia at the Belleville Stratford Hotel. He recalled making great friends from Providence and "never meeting such a bunch of great folks again in one shot." He also had a wonderful time. They were so full of the AYF spirit that they insisted on hoisting the flag on the next year—and they did! There was not a hotel big enough in the city to host the Olympics, but there were plenty of motels, as Niagara Falls was a famed hometown vacation spot. In those days, they could only way they could handle book all of the rooms was to prepay and book the rooms in several of these motels. AYFers around the country had to call the committee, who then assigned them to rooms and collected their cash when they arrived. It was the only Olympics that Niagara Falls ever hosted. There is no longer even a sign on this. That's what Olympics is all about.

There is another story about the 1969 Providence Olympics. This is from the New Jersey Olympics in 1999. I also met a friend of my father's, Dr. John Der Manuelian. My dad suggested I ask what his favorite Olympic memory was. He had a great one. Dr. John was at the first ever AYF Olympics in 1934 in Brockton, Mass. That was pretty cool. I wish we had some film footage of that event."

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

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

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

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

BOSTON, Mass.—It’s one thing to win a triple gold at the AYF Olympics, set records from time to time, and write an article about the show and get a job as a news director. But a new job as Eastern Region di-
rector of the Armenian National Committee is another matter.

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

Once again, she tripped in the discuss, golf, and baseball throw, slamming any competition that may have come her way.

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

She was the fact she was able to play with her cousin Ani Hagopian (Detroit) and her friend Anya Battaglino (Boston). You’d never know they were com-
petitors, judging by the friendly banter exchanged by the trio.

“Competitors, judging by the friendly banter exchanged by the trio.”

sequence, not to exclude her best friends. These days. And she wouldn’t have her multi-faceted life quite nicely.

For Michelle Hagopian, her life these days is like a walker wandering in the redwood forest. She arrived in Watertown from Granite City with her dad Jeff and spent the next three days getting an apart-
ment ready before checking into the hotel. Her room mom and sister Megan also joined the ef-
fort.

Olympics…

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 6

York Olympics I first recall, when my fairly new friend Alec Sarafian and I would drive our cars around the Country Stadium causing havoc and may-
hem. Those were the days our parents worried about us as long as we checked in periodically.

Olympic Bulls in my teenage years were considered a sacred experi-
ence. We rented tuxedos each year. I can’t picture anyone doing that now.

“I have met some of my life-
long friends through the AYF and Olympic weekends. We almost al-
ways drove with the entire family and it was always the last hurrah before the dreaded school year be-
egan again. The memories I have are numerous, probably mostly only memorable to me. However, these are memories I still cherish and hope my children will be able to create their own in the near fu-
ture.”

John Arjian was a member of the 1961-62 “Armen Valley” “Armen Garo” Chapter. He remembers the Montreal Olympics in 1970. He was only 20 years old and remembers driving 515 and 650-year-old girls up and back. As he was the hero of his parents, he spent the weekend watching over and tending to the young li-
dees. Parents who were crazy pro-

ductive of their daughters let them

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

Olympic Queen and Women’s high scorer Nancy Gavoori’s earli-
est Olympic memories was going to the track practices at Mumford High School in De-
troit think “Beverly Hills Cop” and Eddie Murphy. She remem-
bers watching Diana Aranosian Shnorhokian, another prodigal athlete in the pentath-
lon, she’s putting a journalism ca-
reer on hold to serve her heritage.

Karina held the post for three years before returning to a nurs-
careering, and finishing as the fourth leading women’s scorer of all time with 122 points.

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

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

Graduating from one of the top journalism schools in the country (Missouri) will only en-
chance Michelle’s objectives in the ANCA. She plans to continue writing some columns for the Armenian Weekly; the experi-
ence will come in handy for press releases and editing. Her office is inside the Hairenik Building across from her apartment in Wat-
tertown.

“Karina was one of the first I called about the job and she was very influential,” said Hagopian.

“When I used to come to camp and visit the Hairenik, I’d think this would be a cool place to work some day. And here I am.”

Olympic Balls in my teenage years for trophy expenses.

The 1994 Olympic weekends. We almost al-
ways drove with the entire family and hope my children will be able to create their own in the near future.”

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

This was a good fun little project. Thanks to everyone who shared their stories and memo-
ries.
Tutunjians Turn Olympics into Family Affair

BY TOM VARTABEDIAN

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

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

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

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

Son Stephen qualified for the 25 free, 25 butterfly, and 50 breaststoke. Sharing the glory are Natalia Sadanian (Providence), left, bronze, and Faye Khatchadourian (Montreal), silver, all Varantians. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

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

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

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Detroit’s Derderians: An Influx of Olympic Generations

By Tom Vartabedian

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

When his star-studded career finally ended, he had collected an unprecedented 10 consecutive titles. No doubt, Derderian helped elevate the tennis component of these Olympics, as people began taking notice and following the game with avid interest. It came to a halt in 1971 right here in Boston. Derderian had moved to the area and had transferred to the “Siamantos.” It was his finale as an athlete and he was facing a little-known 16-year-old sur- prise in John Saryan from Racine. His finale as an athlete and he was moving to the area and had transferred to the “Siamantos.” It was his finale as an athlete and he was facing a little-known 16-year-old surprise in John Saryan from Racine. Saryan overcame triple match point against Derderian, defeated Boston’s Alan Telian for the gold, and unveiled an impressive championship streak of his own.

If anything, Derderian launched a generational run that extended 50 years. He was named an Olympic King in 1980 and later became a catalyst for ANCA activity throughout the region. “Growing up inside a small community like Indian Orchard was really super,” said Derderian. “We did okay with four Olympic Kings. We’ve overcome some adversity in our lives but cherish these good times with our kids.”

Next to crash the scene were the three children, led by son Aram, who plumped his way to 74 points. He was part of seven winning Detroit teams, which re- tained the Olympic Cup in 1995 and 2002 (which he captained). Armen was known for his ver- satility, winning the pentathlon, dashes, and distances. A pulled hamstring in one Olympics and a Mediterranean disease in another kept him from achieving even great- er heights.

In 2007, he entered the Eastern HMEM Olympics and emerged with three gold medals. He has officiated for 19 years in the Mid- West Junior Olympics as well as the Junior and Senior AYF, joined by colleagues Alex Sarafian and Mike Kazarian. Sisters Kristen and Kara also made an impression during their outings. Kristen won medals for Ju- nior and Senior distance running events, while Kara participated in the only tennis doubles tournament in Olympic history, earning a silver medal. Also in the picture is Derde- rian’s son-in-law Alex Sarafian and David Kazarian, both of whom were mammoth contributors to Detroit’s success. Sarafian was a member of the University of Michi- gan track team, scored 90 points in the Olympics, served on Governing Body, and for many years coached the Juniors and Senior.

As for Shahrigian, he tallied 82 points, captured 3 pentathlon titles, and also coached many years. Now, along come his children Taleen and Armen to carry the torch, with Aram and Tamar wait- ing in the wings. Taleen eclipsed two records the minute she stepped onto the track this year, giving notice of a promising future in years to come. Taleen had just surpassed that time a month before in the 1,600 meters. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

Kaiserian, Tutunjian Rule the Pool

By Tom Vartabedian

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

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

Kaiserian, who belongs to an elite swim family, struck his road to victory in the 50 fly, 50 free, and 50 backstroke. The 15 points gave him 84 in all, trailing only Stephen Tutunjian (Providence) by a single point in the overall active standings.

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

Boston’s Eric Mosesian had the home crowd cheering for his victory in the 50 back. Toronto’s Goro Arianian gave the Canadi- ans some comfort by winning the 50 breast. The Philly women were on top of matters, thanks to a double victory by Molly Memarian in the 50 and 100 freestyles. The “Sib- boule” also took the 4x25 relay.

Kudos to Detroit’s Meline Topouzian for capturing the 50 back. Another four-month-old grand- daughter of Olympic Generations, Lynne Tutunjian in the 25 free and 50 breaststroke, with times of 28.9 and 55.1, respectively.

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

Taleen Shahrigian’s Records No Fluke

By Tom Vartabedian

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

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

The 1,600 came first as she blew out the field after the sec- ond lap. Included in the carwash was Mary Nazarian of Prov- idence, the previous record-holder in 2009. Taleen’s time of 5:17.5 was 7 seconds faster. Mary ran four years for the University of Rhode Island, graduating in 2011.

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

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

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

The last time in records in these events was recorded in 1976 by Robin Avedisian, also from Detroit, who ran a 3:44.4 in the 880 and 5:51.2 for the mile. In 1978, Andrea Nazarian, again a Detroit, broke two daily records her first year as a much-touted 16-year-old. And she re- peated that act again in 1979 in 2 other sprints in what appears to be the greatest back-to-back years ever. Andrea still has all 4 records in the 50, 100, 200, and 400, and is regarded as the best female sprinter ever.

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

Another with 2 marks, though not together, is Granitize City’s Michelle Hagopian in golf (440) and discus (105’2”), as well as Lynne Tutunjian in the 25 free and 50 breaststroke, with times of 12.17 and 34.8.

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

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

CONTINUED ON PAGE 12
New Jersey Three-Peats in Softball

BY TOM VARTABEDIAN

BOSTON, Mass.—Mercy! Will somebody please stop the bleeding. The New Jersey “Arsens” have turned the AYF softball tournament into a regular transfusion. They “mercey-ed” all three opponents, meaning they won each of their 3 games by 15 runs or better to preserve a trend that started three years ago.

The “Arsens” have been totally in a class by themselves, thanks to a cadre of talent, an infield composed entirely of the four Sarajian brothers, and the crisp coaching of veteran Mark Alashaian.

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

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

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

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

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

Alashaian has now coached all three championship teams, and has brought a source of pride to this community.

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

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

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

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

For the record, New Jersey did share the title last year with the Canadians when rain cancelled the title game.
Track and Field from Tom Vartabedian’s Lens

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

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

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

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

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

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

Medalists in women’s javelin includes, from left, Araxiei Tossounian (Detroit), third; Lindsey Santarian (Philly), first, and Alyssa Reub (Providence), second. (Tom Vartabedian photo)
Bejian, Yeransian Net First Tennis Titles

BY TOM VARTABEDIAN

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

Matt Bejian gave Greater Boston a boost by defeating his 16-year-old teammate Armin Festekjian, 6-1, 6-0, in a match that appeared more competitive than the final score indicated. A third place by Gariq Habeshian made it a "Nejdeh" medal sweep.

Emma Yeransian of Providence stunned North Andover. Olivia Barbarian, 6-4, 6-1, after a nip and tuck battle the first set. For Barbarian, that's two silver and a bronze over the past three years, giving North Andover its only points. Third place went to Phillie's Lindsay Santier.

Men's division

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

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

"I never took tennis seriously until I was 15," Bejian revealed. "Now, I can't get it out of my system. Playing high school really helps.

And what a career this has been at Needham High where he was 4-5 in doubles. Undeterred and pristine! He and his partner were so formidable, they led their school to two straight Division 1 state championships.

Bejian is ranked among the top 15 New England players in his age category and also carries a national rank. He's expected to move into Number 1 singles this year for Needham. Academically, he's an honors student and on his school's Science Team.

"Right now, I have my sights set on giving my school another state title and playing tennis in college," he said. "I've seen Armen play in tournaments and have followed his career," said Bejian. "We hit a lot together. I knew what he was capable of doing as a player and had to be on my toes.

Women's division

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

"It was a good experience," she said. "Seeing everyone come together like this is a rich experience.

"Olivia was good defensive. She had me worried."

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

She's ranked in the top 10 of her class as a National Honor Society student, is a French National Honor student, and plays volleyball. Right after her match, back to school she rushed for volleyball practice. Working at a tennis club and taking lessons there certainly helps her game.

She also teaches tennis to youngsters in the recreation department.

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

In earlier matches, the champ toppled Philly's Karine Keshgegian, 8-0, and Worcester's Knar Chachchalian, 6-0, 6-0, while Barbarian conquered Providence's Sara Hntilian, 8-2, and Philly's Lindsay Santier, 6-3, 6-2.

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

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

In all, 10 men and 11 women took to the nets in what was considered a decent turnout by tournament director Rich Sarajian, who was pretty impressed with the overall caliber of play from both sides.

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

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

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

The Shahrigians are about to make some more noise at these games.
BOston, mass.—It was an all Greater Boston finish in the pentathlon this year as Vigen Sarkisov and Nairi Krafian brought home their first titles with decisive conquests, scoring 3,256 and 3,178 points, respectively.

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

Sarkisov, a former Soviet citizen with three-quarters Armenian blood, captured the shot-put (38'9 ¾"), discus (98'1/2"), 3000 meters (9:25.5), and long jump (19'11 1/2"). By the time he reached the 1,600, the matter was settled. All he had to do was finish—and he coasted. Two relay races were waiting his services. As it turned out, Greater Boston won both.

Krafian, a highly touted athlete, with sister Araxi took care of matters at the pent. The pent was a natural pro-
doubt, the experience she gained as an ordinary athlete would have been invaluable for her. The pent was a natural pro-

No way was this going to escape her grasp after the training and hard work she put in this summer. Araxi pre-

In all, three women vied for the title with the remaining two well off the mark at 1,220 and 1,144 points. Sarkisov, meanwhile, was pushed by Detroit’s Ara Markarian (2,268) and Philly’s Aram Keshgegian (2,471). The men’s ledger featured six com-

Despite their victories, the two champions were a distance away from the record. The women’s standard is held by Allison Aykian (Boston) with 3,256 points. Len Keshgegian (Boston) holds the men’s mark at 3,078 points.

Vigen Sarkisov

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

Both his parents were gymnasts while the 6'2", 205-pounder opted to play basketball and soccer. In real-

He’s now a senior at UMass Bos-

event but decided to venture back to

In the meantime, the older sisters are waiting in the wings. Nairi and Araxi turn 25 in 6 years. If all goes well, she’ll have two years remaining. “We’d love to be around to see that moment,” rejoiced their grand-

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

Nairi is a junior at Belmont High, runs track there, preudes over the Armenian Club, plays soccer and bas-

With little time on her hands, she’d like to join the Sarat Nova Dance Company.

“With three girls in the pent, it was nice knowing you were going to medall,” she confessed. “It made us re-

In a year as a two-sport athlete and made the

Six years. "You can achieve anything if you put your mind to it and give your best. I hope to be around for the next six years."

Nairi Krafian

A year ago, sister Araxi took this event but decided to venture back to the individual events, particularly the

She ran two victories and did the

This 17-year-old Nairi captured the

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

A year ago, sister Araxi took this

Three women vied for the title

No way was this going to escape her

Still, it was no cakewalk for the

Junior paid dividends.

It’s great competing for a chapter

AN INTERVIEW WITH

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before Raffi finished the race. It was moved Teyss in “Fiddler on the Roof,” and it’s the same calculation that keeps the “Variants” in gear. They don’t know how to compete without it.

This 39th victory was text-book perfect. After a substantial night in the pool, they bounced back with a gold in tennis, then chipped away auspiciously on the track Sunday. They did it with superior athletes, some gifted recruiters, and precise coaching. Throw in discipline, teamwork, and a few unique heroes for good measure and it spells victory.

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

After all was said and done, 8 newcomers were included on a team of 42, while another 10 came aboard as Junior transfers. “Every member was willing to try different events when necessary,” Tutunjian added. “Practices were somewhat difficult due to conflicting schedules, vacations, and other commitments. It was gratifying to win this year in Mal Varadian’s memory.”

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

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

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

This year, he had the late Mal Varadian in his corner, a guy whose parag of AYT-ion, along with other members of his family. On the way home from Olympics, Elmasian stopped off at the cemetery and placed the championship trophy by his grave.

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

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

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

Will the “Variants” show in Washington, or pull another Chico-cago?“We need to start planning early so we can get a huge team to D.C. and defend our title,” he said. “There’s no reason not to think we won’t be there with a full team.”

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

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

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

“Our members represented themselves very respectfully,” he said. “I’m proud of them and reminds of how they might have finished once because they came together as a team.”

Krafian pointed to athletes like Kevork Ourfalian, who competed with a serious injury, as “unseen heroes.”

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

The same could be said for his two daughters, Natri and Araxi, premiere athletes who combined for 15 individual points this year and keyed the relays.

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

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

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

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

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

Keshgegian went out on a limb and predicted success, starting with a gold in D.C. Expect the “Nejdehs” to make a four-year run, counting a resurgence by Detroit.

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

**By Tom Vartabedian**

BOSTON, Mass.—Of all the athletes Rich Chebookjian has coached and competed against, few have been closer to him than Ara Krafian, who helped propel the Boston dynasty of the 1970's. Now, they share another role together—AYF Olympic Kings.

The chapter’s first Olympic Trophy was presented by Ara Krafian’s parents, both of whom have been in the Olympic over the past quarter century. In the words of late Hairenik Editor Jimmy Tashjian, call Ara “the ubiquitous Armenian,” meaning he’s everywhere at once.

Quiet, humble, intense, spirited. Krafian qualifies in each of these superlatives. It hasn’t been easy, durée his compassion with a wife who’s battling an illness, four active daugh-

Born in Waltham, Mass., Chebookjian was an AYF and Camp Haiaistan icon who, together with her late husband Stan, served the community with uncompromising loyalty and convic-

Heather had to be induced just days after working a picnic at Camp Hai-

Richard Chebookjian

Born in Waltham, Mass., Chebookjian was raised in a family with strong ties to Camp Haiaistan, the AYF, and the Armenian Cause. His passion for the AYF stems from his parents, both of whom have been recognized as National Honorary members. In 1997, at the age of 17, he participated in his first Olympics for the Boston “Stamants” Chapter and produced one hallowed page after another in his quest toward stardom. The next decade-plus saw him running for points at record pace until finally reaching 161. His 400-meter record still stands, while the 200 has since been eclipsed—by his nephew (Stephen Vosbikian).

Dominating the sprints, Chebookjian won multiple hoboconing titles by sweeping the 100, 220, and 440-yard dashes. It wasn’t until 1991 that the “Stamants” won their first Olympic Cup. That first championship led to a dynasty throughout the 1990’s, culminating with five straight victories.

Chebookjian’s achievements were not confined to the track. He was frequently seen at conventions and seminars while elected to the Central Executive. He pioneered the Senior Seminar and instilled leadership skills into the membership. As an active member of the Boston community, he chaired April 24 committees and was actively involved with ANCA work.

After marrying his wife, Chebookjian moved to the Philadelphia area and coached the “Siamantos” to a title in the first chapter’s first Olympic Trophy and four Cups in five years. He can still be found at the Junior Athletic Games and on the sidelines of track events coaching his nieces and nephews while also keeping order in the meet. Along with his two sisters, Susan and Mona (Arakelian), they continue to carry the legacy set forth by their parents.

Ara Krafian

Whether by competing, coaching, officiating, or parenting, Krafian has been omnipresent at the Olympics over the past quarter century. In the words of late Hairenik Editor Jimmy Tashjian, call Ara “the ubiquitous Armenian,” meaning he’s everywhere at once.

Quiet, humble, intense, spirited. Krafian qualifies in each of these superlatives. It hasn’t been easy, durée his compassion with a wife who’s battling an illness, four active daugh-

He Did It for His Grandfather Mal!

**By Tom Vartabedian**

BOSTON, Mass.—You won’t find his name among the record-

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

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

Varadian passed on this summer after working a picnic at Camp Hai-

With his youngest daughter just nine, it appears he’ll be around for the long haul.

Mal Varadian

varadian family in memory of our father mal varadian

The Varadians’ Olympic ‘Spirit’ Lives On!

**By Tom Vartabedian**

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

Starting in 1939 with Provi-

Mal Varadian dominated the dashes in 1942 just before World

War II reduced the Olympics in size and stature. During those times, two more members of the family, Haig and Maro, began their tenures in the Olympic Games. Marco became the first fe-

male high scorer from Providence in the 1943 Olympics in Frank-

inux, Mass., and Haig went on to eventually help form the Olympic Governing Body.

In 1945-47, the Olympics be-

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

before the New Jersey Olympics. It was crucial he be at the games with the new computerized system. Best assured. He was there to wel-

come his new prize—then rushed to Jersey just in time for the swim meet.

In his spare time, Krafian volun-

teers on many construction projects for St. Stephen’s School and Camp Haiaistan. With his youngest daugh-

The Varadians’ Olympic ‘Spirit’ Lives On!

Mal Varadian

79th AYF... CONTINUED FROM PAGE 2

Most Improved Chapter

Softball Champion

New Jersey

High Scorers (15 points each)

Michelle Hageian (Granite City) — 8, discuss, baseball throw

Lynne Tutunjian (Providence) — 25 freestyle, 50 breaststroke, 25 butterfly

Mike Kaiserian (Philadelphia) — 50 butterfly, 50 freestyle, 100 freestyle

Stephen Tutunjian (Providence) — high jump, long jump, triple jump

Greg Hamalian (Providence) — 800, 1600, 3200

Pentathlon Winners

Nairi Krafian (Greater Boston) — 2,080 points

Vigen Surjian (Greater Boston) — 2,560 points

Outstanding Records

Lindsey Santander (Fuller) — triple jump (33’1”)

Stephen Tutunjian (Providence) — long jump (22’2” / 4’7” and triple jump (48’4” / 2’7”)

Taley Shahrigian (Detroit) — 800 (2:23.12) and 1600 (5:17.5)

Greg Hamalian (Providence) — 1600 meters (4:33)

Ernest Nahigian Sportsmanship Award

Rafii Markarian (Detroit)

Olympic Kings

Richard Chebookjian and Ara Krafian

Varadian Spirit Award

Arto Guzelian

Cory Tosian Alumni Golf Award

John Alanian (Winchester) — 78

Continued on page 18

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**GROUPS**

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  - GROUP 2: Greater Boston, Providence, Greater Boston, Greater Boston
  - GROUP 3: Greater Boston, Greater Boston, Greater Boston, Greater Boston
  - GROUP 4: Greater Boston, Greater Boston, Greater Boston, Greater Boston

- **MENS**
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  - GROUP 2: Greater Boston, Greater Boston, Greater Boston, Greater Boston
  - GROUP 3: Greater Boston, Greater Boston, Greater Boston, Greater Boston
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**NO ENTRANT**

- Greater Boston
- Providence
- Detroit
- Greater Boston

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- Providence: 6-4, 6-1 0 8-3 0
- Detroit: 35.94 39.00 43.50
- Greater Boston: 47.70

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- Greater Boston: 167' 4" 161' 10" 157' 8" 151' 3"
- Providence: 86' 11" 75' 10" 70' 6" 68' 8"
- Detroit: 14' 10 3/4" 14' 7" 13' 9" 13' 5"
- Greater Boston: 87' 5" 13' 5" 13' 5" 13' 5"

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- Providence: 1,220 1,144 0 0
- Greater Boston: 1,220 1,144 0 0

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- Providence: 35.94 39.00 43.50 47.70
- Greater Boston: 12.75 14.00 14.25 14.82

**GROUPS**

- Greater Boston, Providence, Greater Boston, Greater Boston
- Greater Boston, Greater Boston, Greater Boston, Greater Boston
- Greater Boston, Greater Boston, Greater Boston, Greater Boston
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**SPOONS**

- Greater Boston
- Providence
- Detroit
- Greater Boston

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Sonny Gavoor’s Biggest Win

The Varadians’...

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 15

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

It was in 1947 that John “Jay” Varadian, the youngest of the four brothers, began his 14-year career as an Olympian, this time competing with brothers Mal and Haig in the dashes and jumps. Also at that time, Anahid Karentz, who later married Anahid Giragosian (Haig’s wife) grew to prominence in the women’s jumping events, becoming the female high scorer from Providence in the 1946, 1947, and 1948 Olympics. Haig and Jay successfully competed for a number of years after older brothers Varad and Mal retired. This was part of that well-known Providence team who, along with new brothers-in-law Varoujan Karentz and seven other talented AYFers, traveled to the Detroit Olympics in 1950 and together brought home the trophies. During those years, the Providence Chapter outed this led to a number of AYF Olympic records and scoring titles from the family. For over 15 years, nearly the entire Varadian clan participated and traveled to almost every AYF Olympics, including chartering a plane for the East Coast AYF Chapters to attend the Olympics in Los Angeles in 1972.

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

That started a third generation of Varadian family members in the AYF Olympics, with some still competing, including Beth, Sireen, Armén, Sarah, Sonig, New, Rachele, Simone, Arto, Mal, and, and Anahid (Megerdichian); and Melanie and Ani (Kachadoorian); and Melanie and Ani (Kachadoorian). The family could easily fill the track by themselves in an Alumni Mile!

The fourth generation of Varadians has also already made its mark with Mal’s great-grandchildren Emily, Nicholas, and Carl currently competing in the Varadian family’s 73rd consecutive year of AYF Olympic participation!

This was clearly the vision that the older Varadians had for the AYF and Olympics—that is, subsequent generations participating, enjoying and maintaining the organization and its wonderful traditions.

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

Sonny told me with his characteristic smile and pleasant demeanor, ‘His favorite Olympics?’

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

“We had some great talent here in Detroit and it is satisfying to help a motivated Olympic participant seek higher levels,” he added. The AYF parents in Detroit have been very supportive, taking their kids to track practice, Junior Olympics all over the Mid-West, and Senior Olympics all over the region, with a deep sense of conviction. “We have a super AYF family here in Detroit,’ he said.

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

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

In the local collegiate environment, Sonny and daughter Nancy have coached Schoolcraft College and elevated that school to national level participation in cross country meets.

Let’s not forget the Gavoor family achievements. Sonny and Violet feel great pride in the AYF Olympic achievement of their children, led by Nancy’s astounding total of 104 points, the girls’ 4x100 meter relay in long time chime Jill Tosian Döök.

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

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

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

The Varadians’...
Olympic Tidbits

By Tom Vartabedian

AYF Olympic reunion spans 3,000 miles

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

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

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

“Boom! Boom! Boom!” The beat of a drum jolted him awake.

He had no idea who the intruder was but some guy in the top bunk.

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

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

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

He happened to be seated at a table, scanning the other guests, when he caught an unfamiliar face... 

“Are you Armenian?” a member of the group asked.

“Yep, I’m Armenian,” Arakelian replied.

“Say hello to John here. He’s my childhood buddy.”

“I’m Armenian, too, but that’s no reason to keep a whole platoon from getting some sleep.”

“I happen to be Armenian and this is my instrument.”

“Say a lot for the AYF and its fraternal spirit that never seems to disappear.”

Angel over the Olympics

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

“Says a lot for the AYF and its fraternal spirit that never seems to disappear.”

Food for thought

Much as the athletics and dances are Olympic tradition, so, too, is the customary room party hosted by Maro Dionisiopoulo, a Providence heiress, and her friends. All the kheyma you can eat, along with other consumables. Just follow the smell of garlic off the elevator.

This evening was special. Our table, scanning the other guests, when she caught an unfamiliar face...

Gabriel Arakelian, left and John Krikorian compare U.S. Army draft cards from the Korean Conflict at the AYF Olympic Games. (Tom Vartabedian photo)
Boston welcome booth included, from left, Sara Durgerian, Tina Sajonian, Lucy Hoosian and Susan Chebookjian. (Tom Vartabedian photo)

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

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

Susan and Sara Durgerian stand in front of the Armenian welcoming booth.

Boston, Massachusetts greets massive crowds for the Olympic Games.

A Kaligian family reunion

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

Talk about a family affair! First came the parents, Barker and Seta, followed by their four sons, Dikran, Garin, Aram, and Zohrab, their spouses Seda, Hooshier, Lena, and Holly, all joined by their 10 children.

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

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

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

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

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

Armenian Heritage Park

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

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

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

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

Boston greets massive crowds

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

Boston left no stone unturned in World War II.

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

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

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

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

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

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

“It’s the best steering committee I’ve seen in at least the past five years, maybe longer,” he complained. “Their commitment was evident these past two years.”

Washington makes its plans

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

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

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

“This was the most athletes we’ve ever fielded on the road, so it’s a good sign,” say organizers Tasy Tartarian and Arpa Vartanian. “This will bring our community together in a big way.”

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

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