

HARRY ARSEN KELESHIAN

November 22, 1937 - February 27, 2016

Harry Arsen Keleshian, a business leader and advocate for Armenian causes, died Feb. 27 in Boca Raton, FL. He was born on November 22, 1937, in the Bronx to Arsen Harry Keleshian and the former Alice Garabedian.

Harry came to Greenwich, CT in 1967, the year after he married the former Edna Casparian. He had few resources at the time, but plenty of entrepreneurial vigor and a strong work ethic. He was still working a night job as a photo engraver in the printing business – a job his father insisted he maintain – while forging a path as a small business owner.

Harry threw himself into his adopted hometown, hosting social events, funding aesthetic improvements and organizing the business community for joint projects. He was a founding member of Greenwich Green and Clean, and the Downtown Retailers Association. “He came to Greenwich with nothing. The harder he worked, the more Greenwich gave back to him, and he was so grateful – he had a responsibility to give back,” his daughter recalled.

As an American of Armenian descent, Harry worked to bring awareness and historical understanding to the Ar-

menian Genocide that claimed the lives of one and half million men, women and children beginning in 1915. His father narrowly escaped death during a forced march through the Syrian Desert.



“There isn’t an Armenian family you can speak to that wasn’t touched by this. We remember all these people and what they endured,” Keleshian recalled in an interview last year on the occasion of the centennial of the 1915 genocide. “Sometimes I wake up in the middle of the night and I try to place myself in my father’s shoes. I ask myself, how could he have lived? How could he have survived?”

After a disastrous earthquake hit Armenia in 1988, Keleshian helped 100 children come to the US for medical attention, and he

brought over 12 tons of supplies to the stricken country. He financed additions at St. Gregory the Enlightener Armenian Church in White Plains, NY.

In addition to his wife and daughter, he is survived by a sister, Deanna Stepanian, of Florida; two grandchildren and a number of nieces and nephews. His son, Arsen Harry Keleshian, predeceased him.

MEMORIAL-Harry Keleshian



Harry was always a vital spirit, in whose presence one felt a real joy, and a deep appreciation for life's blessings. We remember his generosity and kindness; his loyalty to family and friends; his devotion to God, church and heritage. He was a man of energy and vision, who placed his abilities in the service of greater things.

Those of us who knew him will never forget these qualities. And we can say, with

regret, that the passing of Harry has left an emptiness in our community, which will never quite be filled again.

Harry Keleshian knew many successes in life, most notably in his career in business and real estate. He was observant, creative, and extremely hard working ó qualities that brought him success in numerous business ventures, and also made him a wise counselor on civic and community matters.

But no matter where he turned his attention in life, the anchor of his heart and soul was always the Armenian Church. This characteristic was ingrained in Harry by his parents, Arsen and Alice ó and through the family remembrance of escaping from the Armenian Genocide, and finding a new life in America.

For a patriotic individual like Harry, his identity as an American was equally a source of inspiration and gratitude. It was in this country that he grew up, went to school, received his first business experience, and pursued the many opportunities open to a man of ambition and imagination. It was here, too, that he met and married his beloved Edna, started a family ó and began the lifelong habit of ögiving backö to both his patrimonies as an Armenian-American.

It was during this time that Harry began his long association with the Armenian Church community in Westchester County. In its early incarnation as the St. James Parish, and its splendid rebirth here as St. Gregory the Enlightener Church, Harry Keleshian stepped briskly into the role of community leadership, eventually becoming the benefactor of the church hall, named in the Keleshian family's honor.

His generosity extended outward to embrace the St. David Church in Boca Raton, the Diocese, and the Mother See of Holy Etchmiadzin. And he became a pillar of the Armenian community, supporting all of its great causes, and serving on the board of such forward looking concerns as the Armenian Church Endowment Fund. His active leadership continued through last year's observance of the Armenian Genocide Centennial.

The earthquake crisis in Armenia in 1988 touched a special chord in Harry's heart. From the outset of the relief effort, his sense of compassion drew him to the plight of his fellow countrymen ó especially the children of Armenia. He arranged to bring one hundred children to the US to receive medical treatment for their injuries; and collected tons of clothing to deliver to Armenia, to help its citizens make it through the difficult winter months. Harry's numerous personal visits, and the experiences he had among the people of our homeland, would motivate Harry's humanitarian work for the rest of his life.

In this, as in everything he did, Harry found inspiration in his Armenian Christian identity. His personal example allowed countless other people to discover and embrace the precious identity he loved.

Above all else, I think Harry would say that his greatest success in life, his greatest labor of love, was his own family. The life he shared with Edna, his beloved wife, was deeply meaningful. He was a wonderful

father, as I know from my acquaintance with Alyssa.

To his wife Edna; their daughter Alyssa and her husband Thomas; to Harry's grandchildren Harry and Thomas; to his sister Deanna; to the entire Keleshian family and Harry's countless friends and colleagues, I extend my deepest prayers of sympathy and hope. May God be with you all. And may He keep Harry Arsen Keleshian in His holy presence until we are all re-united once again in God's eternal kingdom.

Excerpts from Archbishop Khajag Barsamian's eulogy



My dad, Harry Keleshian, better known as Mr. K., Uncle Harry, or "The Mayor of Greenwich" was many things to many people - a mentor, a 2nd father, a brother, a dependable friend, or perhaps his most prized title - Baba.

Harry Arsen Keleshian was born in Bronx, NY the son of an Armenian genocide survivor. Not surprisingly, he started working at an early age doing odd jobs to earn money. Later he followed in his father's footsteps and became a photo engraver. Like many Armenians, he'd spend his weekends in Asbury Park, which is where he met his future bride, Edna Casparian. She ran as hard as she could - away from him - but as you all know, once he sets his mind on a goal, there's no stopping him.

Soon after they married - with little to their names - they bought the Carnival Card Shop in Greenwich, CT. That was it. Harry and Edna were a team from that moment until today. In everything. Their marriage was the foundation of his family. They ran their businesses as a team. And they gave back - to their church, their community and their hometown - as a team. He was concept; she was details. A perfect combination - as long as he made the rules. He'd say, "All those who disagree signify by saying - I Quit."

It was in those early days that my dad became known as "The Smile King" - so appropriate right? - as he created a smile button craze in the 70's by becoming the single largest distributor of smile buttons.

While building his many entrepreneurial business, he began investing in real estate. He was a tough, instinctively smart businessman with unbelievable vision and unstoppable energy. A human calculator with a 24/7 brain but also a heart as big as his drive to succeed. He would take me to meetings with him, maybe because he knew that someday I would have the privilege of working side by side with him, which I've done every day for the last eight years.

I consider myself the luckiest girl in the world. Now I am not going to lie. He was tough, he was demanding, it was his way or the highway. He would say "What do I have to do and who can I get to do it?" The answer was usually me or mom. But "Harry University" was the best education a person could have and I know many of you received this education as well. I am grateful to him for the on the ground training and for trusting me with this incredible responsibility. He valued hard work, he valued honesty and he valued people - most importantly he valued relationships. He never did a deal without having a relationship. And he never threw away a single thank you note. He loved being an adviser and mentor; he went out of his way to help anyone who had the desire to succeed. And he loved celebrating all these relationships. He'd host parties in the store for Christmas, and for National Secretaries Day, inviting office workers throughout Greenwich. During the holidays, he would hand deliver hundreds of gifts to those who made our town tick - the police, the fire dept., town hall and of course all tenants. Our annual company Christmas party in June was something he looked forward to because he wanted to celebrate with the people he valued.

People think of Dad as a successful businessman but there was so much more that defined him. As the

MEMORIAL-Harry Keleshian



son of an Armenian Genocide Survivor, he was extremely proud of his Armenian heritage. If your name ended in ՕԻԱՆՕ you were ՕԻՆՕ. Growing up he would go through the phone book and call any Armenian and invite them over. It happened in Greenwich and it happened when he traveled. His compassion and empathy for the victims of Armenia's earthquake in 1988 led him to work with Americares to bring 100 wounded children back to the US for medical attention, and to help collect over 250,000 pounds of clothing, which he personally helped deliver.

He was actively involved in so many Armenian organizations and causes that he truly believed in, including the Armenian Church Endowment Fund and the Armenian Assembly. And of course his beloved St. Gregory parish.

Just last year during the 100th anniversary of the Armenian Genocide, he organized commemorative events and local billboards recognizing the first Genocide of the 20th Century. He didn't believe in doing anything small. If you were going to do it, do it right, do it big and do it proud. He was looking forward to seeing the new Harry & Edna Keleshian Hall at St. Gregory and was so proud of the Arsen Keleshian Dining Hall at the new St. Nersess Seminary .

My dad was full of life and the life of the party. The outpouring of condolences has been overwhelming. One of a kind, no one like him, my friend, my father, my brother, my mentor, I miss him already, the greatest guy I ever knew, an asset to the community, irreplaceable, a positive force, a fixture in my life, an angel, an inspiration, a patriarch, a legend, a lion, a great man ó I could go on. Thank you all for your kind words and of course for being here. I believe my dad is looking down on this church and smiling. Perhaps with a glass of Vodka in one hand, and a cigar in the other.

My dad always said, "Don't ask the question unless you know the answer." So here's a question I wish I never had to ask, but I will. "Can we get over this incredibly sad and unexpected loss?" The answer is Yes, one day we will for two reasons: First because my dad left a legacy that will keep him alive ó through me, my husband Tom, our children and through each of you upon whom he has left a profound mark, on our hearts and in our lives; and second, because my dad would tell us to do so, and like always ó we will listen to him. I love you dad.



Harry Keleshian with Thomas & Harry Bonomo (L) and Nickolas and Christopher Cehreci (R) recipients of the special appreciation from Harry K. for their donations towards the Billboard Project in commemoration the Centennial of the Armenian Genocide

Excerpts from Alyssa Keleshian Bonomo's Eulogy

Many character traits or words come to mind when we think of Uncle Harry. Leader, positive thinker, motivation, strength, generosity, humor, wittiness, spontaneous, advisor, good listener, tough love, big thinker, huge heart and passionate about being Armenian. And regarding being Armenian, one of his famous lines were: օիf you find something better we will all convert. So far no one came to me with anything better.

Uncle Harry made an IMPACT on so many people. It's unusual for one single person to have a positive effect on hundreds and hundreds of others. I was thinking about "how" this was possible. As busy as Uncle Harry was, he always made time for all of us. Time is our most valuable commodity as human beings. We can't get it back. And he was extremely generous with his most valuable thing in life: His Time. Those encounters we spent with him were typically to hear about life lessons for both business... and our personal lives. They came in the form of breakfasts at the diner, lunches all around Greenwich, and back in the day, meetings in that famous office at Stallion Trails, or even when he sat behind his bar.

The subjects could have been about your career, something about family or children related, something about giving or being philanthropic, or he just loved to talk shop, usually about the stock market, economy or the church! ...and every time you learned a lesson. Uncle Harry was a RELEVANT individual in so many lives. This is what makes the impact of this loss so difficult.

I was thinking...The degree of pain we feel when someone passes away depends on the Impact that person had in your life. I'm sure many of you out there can point to something in your life where Harry had relevance, influence, and made an impact...

Uncle Harry was my Rock:

He was a rock for me in both good and bad times. He would give me tough love, even in good times, to challenge my character and keep me in check. But he would definitely let me know he was proud of me. And then when times were tough, he would listen and usually offer very sound advice. I will definitely miss having that rock in my life.

"Give until it hurts"

When we were raising money for the church hall, Uncle Harry said օwhatever you're thinking double itօ. He pushed me to give more and more, and I did. He always said "the more I give the more I receive, and the better I feel" and he was right. Not only did I feel good about giving, which was enough of a reward, but a very good thing happened to me professionally and personally following that decision. It's funny how these things work! .and how Uncle Harry was usually right!

We love you and will miss you Uncle Harry.

Excerpts from Bryan Stepanian's speech during the reception



Together we went on to 10 trips to Armenia after the earthquake with medical trips to V. S. Hospitals for surgeries and helped 75 injured.

Provided 50,000 refugees in Armenia with winter clothes, shoes, kerosene heaters to keep people alive in winter months.

We organized and hand delivered all of the above items by families interviewed and by villages of 35660; utilized volunteer fighters to guard and deliver with one of us in each village.

We bypassed the Armenian Government officials and received no help from any Armenian organizations that had funds donated to them after the earthquake.

Everyone should be lucky to have a soul brother like Harry. May he rest in peace.

George Lylegian, Soul Brothers for 34 Years

MEMORIAL-Harry Keleshian



Harry was a man with pan-national interest and concern. Other than his immediate family his concern extended to his community, his church and his people. Each time he spotted in the local newspaper the name of an Armenian person or family just moved to Greenwich or nearby community, he would make it his business to invite them to his house for a welcoming, scrumptious, Armenian dinner. We used to call him "The Armenian Ambassador" because he cared for every Armenian.

Following the earthquake in Armenia, he made several trips taking aid and bringing wounded children to the US to be medically treated. Edna, his wife, was always with him in family, social, communal, charitable and any other function. They were inseparable.

One of the characteristics which stood out in Harry was his sense of humor. At times he uttered "digging" comments, but he was always kind and good humored. He was the life of the party.

Harry was a good friend. You would cherish his friendship, where there was loyalty, generosity and goodwill. I miss him and sometimes in church I look back to see him and Edna walk in at the exact time he had decided was the good time to say "Hye" to Jesus.

Unforgettable Harry.

Rev. Fr. Karekin Kasparian



It's been a few months since Harry's passing, and as I was cleaning my email boxes I stumbled into some of his emails that I had saved. Harry was a prolific email sender; at least once a day and sometimes more, if he was forwarded interesting ones from other sources. Emailing was his thing; incessantly tapping along.

Most of his emails were funny (reflecting on old age), some sarcastic (life and societal issues), and a lot politically tinted ones.

He had different lists of people, and he would send the emails he thought appropriate to some and not others. Some people would send him their comments, and if it didn't please Harry, he would rebut with a long drawn response to justify his views; this could go for a few days until the original respondent would give up!

Harry had a big heart, pleasant with others, and with an innate sense of humor. It was always a joy to be in his company. But, he couldn't suffer foolsnor people who had opposite political views. Politics was in his blood. He would have a feast now with this on going political circus!

Woe to me if I failed to quickly respond to his emails! I would get a phone call gently castigating me!

His big beef was the turtle pace in securing the approvals of the Keleshian Hall. I kept on telling him we would get the permit soon, and we would say "you'd better build this Hall before I die!"

Well Harry, now we are moving at a faster pace and soon enough the structure will be up.

I know you're up there chuckling and telling both Arsens "look, now that I'm gone he's rushing to finish the Hall!"

Harry, I miss you....

Your friend,

Zaven Tachdjian



Harry & Edna Keleshian New Hall

GROUND BREAKING CEREMONY APRIL 24TH, 2016

On April 24th, along with the commemoration of the Armenian Genocide, we performed the 40th day memorial service in memory of Harry Keleshian. Also, we held the groundbreaking ceremony of the new Harry & Edna Keleshian Hall.

We also recalled on this day that the message of the Holy Martyrs to us is to grow and prosper. We laid a foundation for the future of our younger generation who will continue keeping their legacy alive.

The Women's Guild hosted the fellowship refreshments in memory of Harry Keleshian and in honor of the Groundbreaking ceremony.



