KRIKOR GAYJIKIAN'S LEGACY

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Vahe H. Apelian, Loveland, OH, 9 September 2010

Forty-four (44) States have thus far recognized the Armenian Genocide. If and when the remaining six States recognize the Genocide, all the 50 States of our Union will have officially acknowledged the Genocide. Apparently, not in all cases the sum total of the 50 States make up the Federation. We will still need the recognition of the United States Congress.
I am sure that each State had its own select group of people who strived to have their state recognize the Genocide. And as in most-- if not all-- endeavors there is " the first among equals" who drives the efforts. The work to have a State recognize the Armenian Genocide is a grassroots undertaking. There is no centralized body that has directed or directs these and such efforts. The case was no different with Ohio, the Buckeye State, nicknamed after the trees that were predominant in the State at one time.

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On April 17, 2007, Governor Ted Strickland (D-OH) issued a proclamation recognizing the Armenian Genocide. Shortly after becoming the 40th US State to acknowledge the Armenian Genocide, Mayors Michael Coleman of Cincinnati, Mark Mallory of Columbus and Frank Jackson of Cleveland, issued proclamations in remembrance of the Armenian Genocide.

There is truth, understandably not absolute, in the saying that all politics is local. Ohio is generally recognized to be a swing State in national elections. However, there is no sizable Armenian community to make a dent in the electoral fates of the local candidates. There had to be more than election consideration to have the Governor of the State, and the mayors of its three largest cities

issue such proclamations. The person who brought this to fruition, on behalf of the ANCA, undoubtedly is former congressional candidate David Krikorian who twice unsuccessfully tried to unseat the Republican Congresswoman Jean Schmitt (R-OH) who has claimed that she is not a historian to characterize the WWI atrocities as Genocide. However instead of abstaining from the debate, she has lent her office into opposing the passage for the recognition of the Armenian Genocide in the Congress. She has now brought a defamation suit against David Krikorian at the tune of 6.8 million dollars!

In his efforts spearheading the recognition of the Armenian Genocide, David Krikorian went to Washington, DC and visited the Ohio Congressional delegation advocating passage of Armenian Genocide legislation. David also called upon his fellow "O-Hye-Oian"s, as he called them, through the many emails he sent to us, asking for our help by contacting our local elected officials to support his efforts. I am sure many or most did. However, I do not think any of us was more helpful to him than the long interred Krikor Gayjikian.

Who is Krikor Gayjikian?
During his efforts to have Ohio recognize the Genocide, David happened to be in an old-books store in Oakley, which may be considered a yuppie town in greater Cincinnati. David found a book in that bookstore titled "Martyred Armenia and the Story of My Life" written by Krikor Gayjikian who was born in Gaban in Anatolia and survived the 1894-1896 Hamidian Massacres. He was orphaned at an early age. Krikor escaped and came to Cincinnati in 1911 because he had a cousin named Boghosian who owned and operated a candy store there.

Krikor's book recounted his story of survival, his experiences in America and a chronology of the Genocide. The book was printed in 1920 by God's Revivalist Press which is affiliated with the over 100 years old God's Bible School in Cincinnati. M.G. Standley, who was prominent in God's Bible School, wrote the foreword on May 17, 1920. Ohio thus unquestionably had welcomed in its midst a survivor of the massacres of the Armenians who did not speak English and was not familiar with the American way of life, and gave him all the opportunities to thrive in his adopted country, learn the language and become proficient to write a book about the Armenian Genocide and have it published in Cincinnati with local support.

The book was a revelation to David Krikorian. Soon he supplemented his drive to the elected officials for the State's recognition of the Armenian Genocide with electronic copies of the book. The rest is history in our long, grassroots quest to have Congress recognize the Armenian Genocide.

As to Gayjikian, his grand daughter Cindi Helton-Campbell provided the following personal information about her maternal grandfather. After settling down in Cincinnati, Gayjikian married Osanna Garboushian from Kessab through an arranged marriage. Osanna was born on March 10,

1892 in Kessab. She was a teacher. Her father's name was Gabriel. Her mother was from the Arslanian family of Kessab. She arrived to Cincinnati on May 2, 1921 and they were married three days later. The Gayjikians raised four children, Sam who lives in Lucene Valley, CA, John and Lucy who are deceased and Rose, Cindi's mother.

Krikor Gayjikian's calling was in mission work and was a life-long missionary for God's Bible School. From 1929 to 1938 Krikor accompanied by his wife and their three children engaged in mission work in Antioch, Kessab, and in Beirut where their daughter Lucy was born. Upon their return Krikor continued his mission work in down town Cincinnati, OH where he also owned a thrift shop in the later years of his life.

Krikor wrote two additional books as well, titled "A Life Full of Miracles" and "Twentieth Century Miracles". "Martyred Armenia and the Story of My Life" is 308 pages long and is posted on line and can be tracked down through one of the search engines.

His grand daughter, Cindi Helton-Campbell, lives in Mount Orab, Ohio with her family. She takes care of her mother Rose, Krikor Gayjikian's surviving daughter.