THE LAST OF THE THREE

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Category: Opinions

Viken L. Attarian, Montreal, 5 March 2011

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Pierre was the last survivor of the trio of Attarian brothers who were a towering presence in the Armenian cultural and intellectual scene of Lebanon for close to four decades, starting in the late fifties. He was the youngest brother of my father, writer, essayist, literary critic and publisher Alphonse Attarian (Armen Tarian) and the poet, essayist and political and community leader Karnig Attarian.

Pierre had inherited the common physical trait of the three Attarians, ironically, from his mother Zohra. A relatively shorter stature with a proportionately larger head full of hair. Of the three brothers, he resembled her the most.

He was also the lesser known of the three. Because he was much younger than the other two, his was more a role of behind-the-scenes. Like his brothers, he was an active member of a collective that called for a cultural revolution in the late sixties and started publishing the *Ahegan* which was politically unaffiliated and advocated a modern critical approach to the analysis of literature, and the graphic and performing arts; only in the pursuit of true excellence; art not closed on itself, but open to the world. Like his brothers, he was an active member of the *Lipananahye Kragan Shrtchanag,* the Lebanese Armenian Literary Circle which his brothers had helped found, and which has been the focal point of progressive intellectual activity in the Lebanese Armenian community for over half a century.

For all of his life, he worked at the firm of the great Lebanese architect Louis Tabet, and has had an important input in many of the famous projects of the firm, from official residences, to hotels, to apartment complexes and office buildings.

His greatest love has been the cinema. He was a lifelong worshipper of the art, an ardent collector of

literature about the topic and a great source of information. The cinema section of his library was probably unmatched at the time. An ardent reader like his brothers, he was also a great fan of French literature and the chansonnier tradition.

My uncle, had an unmatched sense of humour and wit. He had an uncanny sense of the absurdity of human existence and could give an ironic twist to any story he told. Had he lived in the West, he would surely have become either a successful stand-up comedian or a humourist.

His last significant creative act was his collaboration with a group of friends and family to posthumously edit and publish my father's manuscripts. In a sense, I don't think he ever recovered from the untimely death of both of his brothers who never made it even to seventy years of age. He outlived them in a sad world which had stopped making sense a long time ago. It was not the one that he had worked hard to rebuild in his youth. I am at least glad though that he witnessed the great victory of the people of Egypt against tyranny. I am confident he felt somewhat vindicated, that what his family stood for was not in vain.

I saw him last about five years ago when he attended a special event honoring my contribution at the AGBU in Montreal. He sat at my table, next to my friend (also now deceased) the great mayor of Mount Royal, Mrs. Vera Danyluk. He was somewhat uneasy as he always shunned the limelight. His Parkinson's Disease had started to advance. He looked at us and said smiling:

"I am trembling all over, but I am not afraid". It just said it all.

And now, the three are united once more.