



from the office of the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America

news!

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On a Friday evening in the middle of March with the first harbinger of soft spring winds being washed by the rain, diners began slipping into Club Yerevan adjoining Kavookjian Hall in the Diocese of the Armenian Church in New York. The meal for the evening consisted of Karni Yarikh, Bulghour Pilaf, salad, Bourma and coffee-- all for the bargain price of \$2.50. For those who wished to test the a la carte items, these too, reasonably priced, were available-- lahmajun, beoreg, bourma, beer, soda. Outside the dining room there was Sangria --glistening red in a bowl. When diners finished their meal they could step out of Club Yerevan, past the ticket table, through Kavookjian auditorium, into the kitchen for refills of coffee.

Among the diners this particular evening were Archbishop Torkom Manoogian at a table with Bishop Zgon Der Hagopian of Milan under the sign Yeritassardootian Street (all such signs in the Club are named after actual streets and avenues in Yerevan. Some others are Sayat Nova Avenue and Gomidas Street). After they had completed their meal they were joined for discussion by a lady from an adjoining table who was a choirmaster of a church of the Western Diocese in Los Angeles.

As the diners finished their meals some of them went out of the Club into the Hall to join in the activities there -- to join predominantly younger people who were playing basketball, volleyball, tavloo, chess and ping-pong. In the center of the Hall were two young Armenian men

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who seemed to be recent migrants from overseas because of the skillful way they were nursing a soccer ball with their feet and passing it back and forth between them.

"Sometimes the Primate goes in after dinner and takes part in some of the activities. He particularly likes ping-pong," said Diane Zanazanian, who along with Alice Antreassian, manned the ticket booth. They are co-chairwomen of the Friday night events which take place two seasons a year-- in late winter through early spring and from fall through early winter. Diane, who is the sister of Adrina Zanazanian, Art Director of the Diocese works for Utell International Inc. New York --- a worldwide hotel representative and hotel marketing firm --- as assistant to the President.

"This is the third year for Open House," she said explaining that three years ago the original purpose was to provide a place for young people to get together and socialize in sports and dancing in an informal setting.

"We even provided live music with a band. But not enough people joined in the dancing so that two years ago we went over to the present format which was to provide indoor sports for people mostly in the 18 to 30 range. As you can see most of the diners in the Club are in a higher age bracket, she continued.

She said that this year attendance seemed to increase every week (this season began with Friday night, February 23 and continues every Friday night until April 13) and that somewhat like a theatre audience every week's group seemed to have its own unique personality.

"About one-third of the people attending every week out of the average attendance of 150 are regulars. Some come from the neighborhood, some come from all parts of the metropolitan area, and occasionally a few are Odar," she explained.

On this night in addition to Club Yerevan and Open House there were a number of other activities taking place in the many anterooms of the building including the rehearsal of both a

balalaika and folk song group and a meeting of the Daughters of Vartan.

The Club and Hall are open from 6 to midnight and dining begins at 6:30. At the helm in the kitchen in the "unofficial chef" of Open House, Vartkes Turekian, an ex-army cook from World War II, who is aided by Araxie and Bedros Barsamian.

"Mrs. Dikranouhi Mattheosian, who passed away about four months ago, worked very hard at our Open House and could prepare everything," Miss Zanazanian recalled.

While the a la carte selections remain the same every week, a different dinner is prepared for every Friday in the Club which was converted from a cloak room which in addition to the street signs, has many posters, and a very intimate and cosy atmosphere. As Miss Zanazanian spoke, the Armenian music was being piped through a loudspeaker into the cafe, "One of our regulars, John Asadourian, is planning to redecorate the Club permanently so that the motif of the place will even seem more true to the spirit of Yerevan."

Several hours after the diners began coming into Club Yerevan there were still quite a few diners there. Outside in the large lobby the Daughters of Vartan were filing from one room to another, balalaika players and folk singers were streaming back and forth to their rooms. A few children were skirting by adults and inside in the Hall scores of guests were concentrating on their chess, volleyball, basketball, tavloo and ping-pong. And those two soccer players had found a place to feel at home.