

ACYOA Alumni Of The Month – February 2023

Zaven and Marilyn Dadian

St. John Armenian Church, Southfield, Michigan

As part of ACYOA Central Council's meeting and visit at St. John in February, Central Council member Andrew Yenicag interviewed Zaven and Marilyn Dadian about their lives growing up in the ACYOA and Armenian Apostolic Church. Pictured: Zaven & Marilyn Dadian, with son Zaven on the right.



Andrew Yenicag: How did you first get involved in the ACYOA?

Zaven & Marilyn Dadian: Growing up at St. John (Detroit) & St. Mesrob (Racine) the friendships we cultivated weekly during Sunday School led to ACYOA, a natural way for us to extend our Armenian connections beyond Sundays.

Andrew: Did you both meet through the ACYOA?

Zaven & Marilyn: Yes. 1986 Sports Weekend in Philadelphia at 2am in an elevator. The rest is history!

Andrew: What impact has the ACYOA had on your lives?

Zaven & Marilyn: It has allowed us to connect with Armenians from all over the country, establishing lifelong friendships that remain to this day. Enduring both time and distance we experienced our lives with a connection and common faith. We now get to enjoy those same friends as together we watch our children experience all of what we did as part of ACYOA.

Andrew: What are some of your favorite memories being involved in the ACYOA?

Zaven & Marilyn: Obviously 1986 in Philly (see above). We had great anticipation to see everyone each September. Visiting new cities and churches, exploring, experiencing and competing; our sports weekends spanned two decades!

Also, the dozens of November Dances at St. John where Armenians from ALL Detroit/Midwest churches came together... the Haleh, Michigan Inn and Lafayette Coney Island hold a special place in our hearts.

Andrew: How special is it that your son, Zaven, is also very involved with the ACYOA?

Zaven & Marilyn: It means the world to us! Knowing that he is actively participating, his intentions mirror those that we had to carry on our great tradition.

Andrew: What, or who, have been some of your influences in your Christian faith?

Zaven & Marilyn: Our genocide surviving grandparents, in that given their plight, they constantly praised, thanked, and remained steadfast in their faith in God. They represent the

link to our heritage, passed down by our parents and being raised in the church. It is core to each of us as a people.

Andrew: Are you still involved in your parish community? How have you both served the church following your ACYOA days?

Zaven & Marilyn: We are devout Christians and proudly attend Badarak every Sunday. As part of being servants we also are active in our parish, having held different positions in the church and its auxiliaries.

Andrew: Do you have any advice for current and future ACYOA members?

Zaven & Marilyn: Joining ACYOA will be integral to your understanding and foundation in being Armenian. Be open to participate whenever and wherever possible. Relationships forged can be accreditive to all aspects of your life. (Philly ~ *wink wink*). Have fun, step forward and partake, you won't be sorry!