
Well-Known Philanthropist Gerard L. Cafesjian Dies At The Age Of 88

times.am - 17/9/2013

Armenian-American well-known philanthropist Gerard Leon Cafesjian dies at the age of 88.

Mr. Cafesjian was born April 26, 1925 in the Bensonhurst neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. His parents had come to the United States preceding the Armenian Genocide by the Turks.

After amphibious training, he served as a sailor in WWII aboard J.P. Morgan's yacht, the Corsair III, built in 1895 and renamed the USS Oceanographer. The ship did extensive survey work in and around Guadalcanal and other Solomon Islands in 1943 and 1944. He also served aboard the USS Andres (DE45), a destroyer escort for convoys from the United States to North Africa in late 1944 and 1945. When he returned after the war he married Cleo Thomas, a nurse he met during the war.

Mr. Cafesjian earned a degree in economics from Hunter College, and a doctorate of jurisprudence from St. John's University Law School, both in five and a half years. He is a member of the New York Bar Association.

Mr. Cafesjian retired from West Publishing when it was sold to Thompson Publishing in 1996. As he said publicly, he felt his destiny was to help the country of Armenia, which had gained its independence after hundreds of years of subjugation under various rulers. The time and circumstances and confluence of resources would help him make a difference for the country. After attending to his family needs, Mr.

Cafesjian established the Cafesjian Family Foundation. Through that Foundation he devoted more than \$128 million to various Armenian projects. His investments included the private Armenia and ArmNews television stations, the Cascade financial services group, real estate and a renewable energy company, all eventually sold. Any profits generated were re-invested in Armenia for further development.

Mr. Cafesjian completely renovated the Cascade site in downtown Yerevan, Armenia. As of early 2000s, it was an unfinished and crumbling Soviet structure of epic proportions on a hillside.

Following a major reconstruction, the Cascade became the site of the Cafesjian Center for the Arts that opened in 2009. The Museum enjoys a world-class sculpture garden with works by Fernando Botero, Lynn Chadwick, Barry Flannigan, Francois-Xavier Lalanne and Jaume Plensa, among others. Admission is free and it is now the most prominent meeting place in Armenia. Over one million people have visited the Center since its opening.

<http://times.am/?p=32232&l=en>

Armenia's President Sends Letter Of Condolences On Gerard Cafesjian's Death

ARMENPRESS - 17/9/2013

YEREVAN - The President of the Republic of Armenia Serzh Sargsyan sent a letter of condolences to the Cafesjian family on the death of national philanthropist Gerard Cafesjian. The Media and Public Relations Department of the President's Office informed "Armenpress" that the aforesaid letter particularly runs as follows:

"Mr. Cafesjian significantly contributed in the strengthening of the Armenia-Diaspora ties years along. His activity was a good example for all those people, who desired to provide a palpable support to Mother Armenia. I highly appreciate his patriotic enterprises. His abilities of an experienced organizer and gracious and unselfish benefactor have found their brilliant expression in the transformation of Yerevan's Cascade and establishment of the Cafesjian Centre for the Arts, which became one of the favorite and popular places in Yerevan.

At this moment of grave loss I offer deepest condolences to Gerard Cafesjian's relatives and friends."

American-Armenian businessman and philanthropist Gerard Cafesjian died at the age of 88 on September 15. The Cafesjian Centre of the Arts informed "Armenpress" about this. The cause of death has not been announced yet.

Gerard Cafesjian was born April 26, 1925 in the Bensonhurst neighborhood of Brooklyn, New York. His parents had come to the United States preceding the Armenian Genocide by the Turks in 1915.

After amphibious training, he served in the United States Navy in WWII aboard JP Morgan's yacht, the Corsair III, built in 1895 and renamed the USS Oceanographer. The ship did extensive survey work in and around Guadalcanal and other Solomon Islands. He also served aboard the USS Andres (DE45), a destroyer escort for convoys from the United States to North Africa. When he returned after the war he married Cleo Thomas, a nurse he met during the war. He earned a degree in economics from Hunter College, and a doctorate of jurisprudence from St. Johns University Law School, both in five and a half years. He is a member of the New York Bar Association.

He began his career with West Publishing as a legal editor in New York City. He was the first employee in the history of the 100-year-old company to be transferred from any subsidiary company into the home office in St. Paul, Minnesota. At West Publishing he rose through the ranks to the position of executive vice president; overseeing sales, marketing, customer service, public relations, all Westlaw office training and development. At West, he also conceived of and started the West Legal Directory and a well-known program, "Art and the Law", which earned he and West numerous awards.

Mr. Cafesjian retired from West Publishing when it was sold to Thompson Publishing in 1996. He felt his destiny was to help the country of Armenia, which had gained its independence after hundreds of years of subjugation under various rulers. The time and circumstances and confluence of resources would help him make a difference for the country.

After attending to his family needs, Mr. Cafesjian established the Cafesjian Family Foundation. Through that Foundation he devoted millions of dollars to Armenia on relief projects including renewable energy, headed a TV station, ran a newspaper, contributed to the clearing of land mines by specially trained dogs, founded a bank, insurance company, and supplied the resources for many other projects. If any of the projects were to prove successful, the profits were to remain in Armenia for further development.

He received accolades and recognition from both the United States and Armenia institutions, including the Ellis Island Award in 2000.

Mr. Cafesjian completely renovated the Cascade site in downtown Yerevan, Armenia. The Cascade was a huge old crumbling Soviet structure of epic proportions. He opened the Cafesjian Center for the Arts at the Cascade in 2009. Over one million people have visited the Center annually since its opening. His goal was to bring some joy into the lives of the Armenians through exposure to art. The Museum enjoys a world-class sculpture garden with works by Botero, Flanagan, Chadwick, Plensa and Lalanne, to name a few. Admission to the sculpture garden is free and it is now the most prominent meeting place in Armenia.

Mr. Cafesjian also assembled a group of properties in Washington, D.C., two blocks from the White House. The intention was the building of an Armenian Genocide Museum and Memorial, but due to continuing litigation, the project remained unrealized and still in limbo awaiting the outcome for still another time killing appeal. Mr. Cafesjian won the basic lawsuit and was awarded the property to do with as he wished.

The community was hoping the museum will be built by April 2015 in time to commemorate the 100-year anniversary of the 1915 Genocide.

Gerard Cafesjian, Philanthropist And Como Carousel Namesake, Dies At 88

By Elizabeth Mohr
Pioneer Press - 17:9/2013

Gerard Leon Cafesjian, the benefactor who helped save the famed Como Park carousel, has passed away, according to Armenian news reports.

Cafesjian amassed his wealth as an executive at West Publishing, where he worked from 1952 until 1996. His philanthropic pursuits went well beyond the salvage and restoration of the Cafesjian Carousel, as it's now known. He also founded the Cafesjian Family Foundation, the Cafesjian Museum Foundation and the Cafesjian Center for the Arts.

Cafesjian, 88, formerly of Roseville, had retired and was living in Naples, Fla.

Messages for family members were not immediately returned Tuesday.

Cafesjian's attorney said he was not authorized to speak on behalf of the family. And a woman who answered the phone at the Cafesjian Family Foundation said no one there was taking media calls at that time.

Several Armenian news outlets were reporting Cafesjian's death Tuesday. Some said Armenian President Serzh Sargsyan had issued a message of condolence to Cafesjian's family.

Cafesjian was born in 1925 in Brooklyn, N.Y., to Armenian parents who immigrated to the United States in 1915, according to a biography on the Cafesjian Center for the Arts website. He served in the U.S. Navy during World War II and later earned a degree in economics from Hunter College and a law degree from St. John's University Law School. He began working for West Publishing in New York City and was later transferred to the St. Paul office.

In 1988 Cafesjian led an effort to save a 1914 merry-go-round that had spun at the Minnesota State Fairgrounds for 75 years. He and others contributed more than \$2 million to save the 68-horse carousel from being broken apart and auctioned off.

The Cafesjian Carousel, which was named in honor of its major benefactor, was restored and initially installed in Town Square in downtown St. Paul.

"I knew it was worth saving and had to be saved," Cafesjian told the Pioneer Press in 1990, just days before the refurbished carousel was set to make its public debut. "We can all be proud of the way everybody got behind it."

When the carousel was unveiled, Cafesjian reportedly bought 100 tickets to give away to children who wanted to ride it and sat on a park bench to observe the event.

"I can't think of getting more pleasure per dollar than what I've gotten already," Cafesjian told reporters at the time.

The carousel was moved to storage in 1996 and found its permanent home in Como Park in 2000.

Through his philanthropic organizations, Cafesjian sought to bring economic relief and artistic venues to Armenia, and to promote Armenian art and history to the rest of the world.

He was most recently mentioned in local news in August when one of his former employees was indicted on federal fraud charges for allegedly embezzling millions of dollars from Cafesjian and his companies.

Cafesjian's wife, Cleo, died in March. The couple met during WWII and were married in July 1947. At the time of Cleo's death, they had two adult children, one granddaughter and three great-grandchildren.

http://www.twincities.com/stpaul/ci_24115379/gerard-cafesjian-philanthropist-and-como-carousel-namesake-dies
