



SUREN D. FESJIAN
August 18, 1910 - January 21, 2002

Suren D. Fesjian, who operated businesses in Europe and the United States, died on January 21, 2002, in New Rochelle, New York. He was 91 and lived in Pelham Manor, New York, a New York City suburb. The cause of death was pneumonia.

He is survived by a daughter, Sylvia Sarkisian, of Greenwich, Connecticut, a son, Robert Fesjian, also of Pelham Manor, five grandchildren, and two great-grandchildren. His wife, Virginia, passed away in 1990 after 55 years of marriage.

Through his long entrepreneurial career Mr. Fesjian, of Armenian origin, began and conducted a number of different businesses. He went to his office in Pelham Manor up to the last days of his life.

In his more than 70 years as a businessman, he was fortunate that his successes outnumbered his failures. Among other things, he was a photographer and later owner of a food processing plant in France, a manufacturer of electrical amusement devices in Ireland, the exclusive distributor of Gottlieb® pinball machines in Europe, an importer of unique merchandise from all over the world, and, at his death, chairman of Ensign Ribbon Burners LLC, a manufacturer of specialized gas burners in Pelham Manor. Through his closely-held Mondial International Corporation, he invested in the 1977 movie "You Light Up My Life", which won the Academy Award for the best theme song of the same name.

Mr. Fesjian was born in the western Turkish city of Ada Bazar. He was the youngest child and only boy; his sister was pregnant with her child at the same time his mother gave birth to him. In 1915 the Turkish authorities relocated his family to a mountainous region away from the city, and his first memories were of Allied prisoners of war who had been brought to nearby prison camps from the Gallipoli campaign of World War I. His family moved to Istanbul where he attended school. He later moved to Marseille, France, where he graduated from the Institut de Beaux Arts in the late 1920's.

In 1935, Mr. Fesjian married Virginia Keljik of London. Her brother, who had been Mr. Fesjian's fellow student for a time in Istanbul, had introduced the couple to each other. The Fesjians lived in Marseille during World War II, and Mr. Fesjian participated in the French Resistance for which he received the Croix de Guerre from the French government after the war.

In 1949, Mr. Fesjian immigrated to the United States with his family, settling shortly thereafter in Chester Park in Pelham and later in Pelham Manor. He began a food processing business in the Bronx, but the American appetite was not yet ready for the Middle Eastern foods he

produced. He closed the factory in 1952 and began an import-export business in Manhattan headquartered at the Empire State Building. That business has continued to this day.

Mr. Fesjian contributed to many worthwhile organizations.

The Suren and Virginia Fesjian Ambulatory Surgery Pavilion was constructed at the Sound Shore Medical Center in New Rochelle, New York, several years ago as a result of his contributions. The Fesjian Pavilion serves Westchester County's citizens. More recently, the Medical Center erected an up-to-date Emergency Department, which has been named in memory of Virginia Fesjian, also due to his generous contributions.

He was also heavily involved in the activities of many Armenian organizations.

Perhaps his biggest efforts were for the Armenian Church Endowment Fund (ACEF) of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church. When he took charge in the 1980's the ACEF Fund held funds of \$1,500,000. Through his efforts as Chairman, the ACEF increased its portfolio to over \$40,000,000. In recent years, the ACEF has been distributing millions of dollars annually to the various churches, institutions, and schools designated by the generous donors.

Mr. Fesjian donated his own money to substantial funds within the ACEF. He established a fund for the St. James Church (Westchester), and the annual income from this Fund was paid to the church each year. Additional Funds were earmarked to help needy students, churches and seminaries.

Besides his contributions in support of the programs the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church, Mr. Fesjian was one of the ten Trustees of the Diocese. As for the Western Diocese, through the guidance of Archbishop Vatche Hovsepian, the reception hall at St. Mary's Armenian Church in Costa Mesa bears the name of Suren and Virginia Fesjian.

Mr. Fesjian was a long-time co-trustee, with the Chase Manhattan Bank, of the Dolores Liebmann Trust Fund. Ms. Liebmann bequeathed \$10,000,000 to the ACEF.

The Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU) is a world-wide charitable organization. For two decades Mr. Fesjian was a member of AGBU's International Central Board of Directors and served as the Treasurer, Chairman of the Finance Committee, Vice-President and Life Director Emeritus of the Central Board. Besides setting up a substantial fund with AGBU which is earmarked for scholarships, Mr. Fesjian contributed to the building of a gymnasium at the AGBU's Pasadena branch and a solarium and swimming pool at the Buenos Aires branch.

In addition, Mr. Fesjian has helped a number of other worthwhile Armenian institutions, churches and cultural centers all over the world. Worth mentioning is his contribution to the Tekeyan Armenian Cultural Association in support of their many institutional projects, including the Suren and Virginia Fesjian Center in Buenos Aires, Argentina - - appropriately on Armenia Street. Also, as one of the Founders and long-time President of the Friends of the Armenian Patriarchate of Jerusalem, Mr. Fesjian not only established a fund of his own, but was instrumental in raising over \$2,000,000 for the training of seminarians in Jerusalem.

Mr. Fesjian was very proud of two awards he received from the religious and secular worlds.

The Armenian Church acknowledged Mr. Fesjian's philanthropic gestures to the Armenian communities by awarding him the St. Gregory the Illuminator Medal, personally bestowed by His Holiness Vasken I, Supreme Patriarch of all Armenians. This is the highest honor a layman can receive from the Armenian Church.

In 1992 he received the Ellis Island Congressional Medal of Honor, awarded to Americans who have distinguished themselves as representatives of the country's diverse ethnic fabric. In previous years, Presidents Gerald Ford, Jimmy Carter, Ronald Reagan, and George Bush were also the recipients of this award.