



ALUMNI OF THE MONTH

NAOMI ZEYTOONIAN

Central Council Chairperson Mallory Maslar interviews Naomi Zeytoonian about her life growing up in the Church, and involvement with the ACYOA.

MM: How did you get involved in the church and ACYOA?

NZ: I was born and raised in Washington D.C. and we had services only when a visiting priest arrived. When I was about 16, my family helped to acquire the property at 42nd and Fessenden St. N.W., where St. Mary now resides. Our bishop at the time urged us to start an ACYOA chapter. The first chair was John Balian, and he recruited members for the first chapter in D.C. At the time, there were no Junior or Senior groups and the Armenian population in D.C. was small, so every available young person was urged to join. I was baptized in the Armenian Church in the then-rented Episcopal St. John's church in Lafayette Square.

MM: What impact has the ACYOA had on your life?

NZ: The ACYOA instilled a love for my church, my heritage, and our culture and traditions. Plus, I met the love of my life at the 1956 ACYOA convention. We were married a year later almost to the day we met.

MM: When raising your family, how did you continue to guide them to be involved in the ACYOA?

NZ: We raised our children in the church from infancy onwards, attending every Sunday until they were old enough to attend Sunday School. My husband served on the altar as a deacon and all of our children attended Camp Nubar and were members of the ACYOA. They are still involved in various church affiliated organizations.

MM: Are you still active in your parish?

NZ: I am and always have been active in my home parish, serving in various positions and organizations. I am a lifelong charter member of the Ft. Lauderdale AGBU, ACYOA, Women's Guild (including their Central Council), and past matron of the Daughters of Vartan. Both my brother and my husband served on the local Parish Councils wherever we resided. Both were instrumental in the building process of St. Mary in D.C. and St. David in Boca Raton, Florida.

MM: Do you have any advice for current ACYOA members?

NZ: Joining the ACYOA is a great way for young people to learn about our church and our heritage, and it provides a venue for lifelong friendships and camaraderie. It prepares them for a lifetime of service to their church and the Armenian Community both here and abroad. I strongly urge all young people to become involved in the preservation of their future as Armenian/Americans.