

Reclusive writer on film

UCI Armenian Students present a film on William Saroyan. A pure writer, he rejected the Pulitzer Prize

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During his life, author William Saroyan disdained fame and materialism or anything that might compromise his work. "Commerce should not patronize art," he said, as he refused to accept a Pulitzer Prize.

Of late, however, his work has moved increasingly into the spotlight, as demonstrated by the recent documentary, *William Saroyan: The Man, The Writer*. The UCI Armenian Students will screen the film on May 3, at 3 p.m. at the Crystal Cove Auditorium.

Saroyan was born in Fresno, California in 1908. He wrote his first book, *The Daring Young man on the Flying Trapeze* in 1934. Throughout his life, Saroyan was both a prolific writer, producing more than 60 novels, and an active member of the Armenian American community. After his death in 1981, Saroyan's remains were buried in both Fresno and Armenia, as a symbol of his devotion to the two different cultures.

William Saroyan was directed and produced by Paul Kalinian, a long-time friend of the author, and fellow Armenian. Kalinian produced the 60 minute documentary from his original photographs, recordings and home movies of Saroyan.

The concept of a biographical film might seem to run counter to the wishes of the reclusive writer, given his reluctance to trumpet ei-

ther himself or his work. In a telephone interview with the *New University*, however, Kalinian supported his attempt to draw attention to Saroyan as an author and individual.

"It was made exactly the way he was," Kalinian explained. "It is unbiased, it is mainly highlights of his life, not a personal account of his family life. It takes no sides. He [Saroyan] used to tell me, 'I wish I heard Victor Hugo's voice on a

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William Saroyan

Writer

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recording, or Guy de Maupassant. I'd like to hear voices of people... something moving."

"He'd like to be remembered that way. I don't think he would object if he were alive today."

Kalinian believes the importance of his documentary lies in the impression it gives of Saroyan as an individual.

"In the early 1900's, he wanted to show the world that he was an Armenian. William was the only person that I know who talked

openly against people who discriminated against Armenians," said Kalinian.

"In the earlier part of the century Armenians were called Turks and that made him mad. What made William famous was when he started talking back people started listening to him. The Armenians were still struggling against discrimination until the late fifties, early sixties."

Although well known in the American Armenian and literary circles, Saroyan's works have not received much recognition from other areas. His novels are not generally found in classroom curriculums. Kalinian believes this absence has to do with Saroyan's subject matter — Armenia.

"If you speak for a nation, it looks like you're automatically excluded from the literary world. Even though he put the subject [his heritage] on top, Saroyan was writing for everybody."

"I don't care who knows about him or who doesn't know about him — the people who know nothing about him, when they see this film, they will learn much more about him than any other opportunity. It describes him as a person, a character, a writer and an Armenian."

Tickets for the May 3 screening of *William Saroyan: The Man, The Writer* cost \$12 for adults, \$6 for students and children. To reserve tickets and for other information, call 551-5946 or 582-3009.