

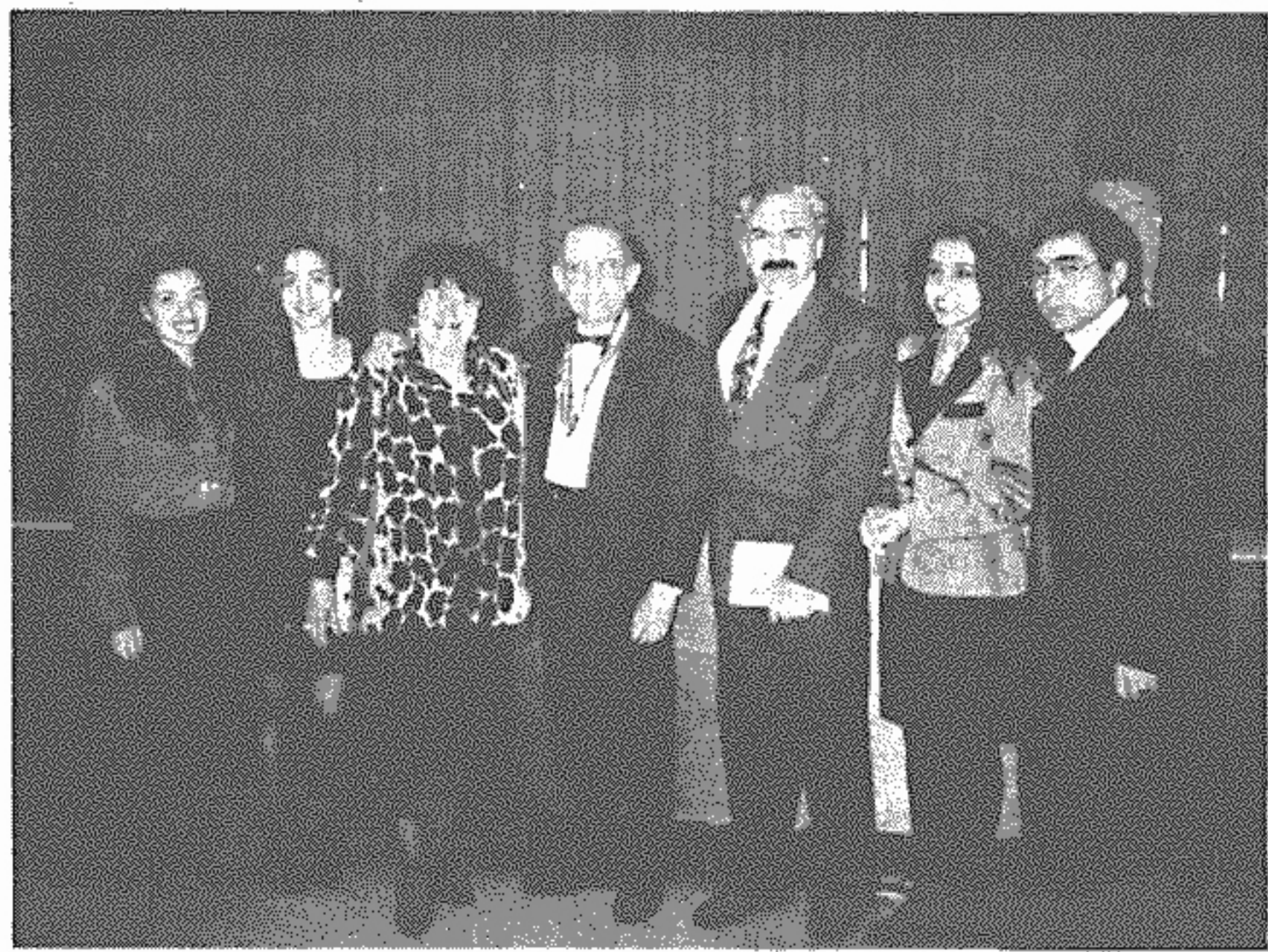
ARTS & LITERATURE**The Time of Saroyan's Life
Marked in NY Film Debut**

by Lana Kazangian

In his 1939 visit to New York, William Saroyan wrote the first draft of his Pulitzer prize-winning play *The Time Of Your Life* on rented Royal portable typewriter, in a room at the Great Northern hotel, during a six-day stint. On Sunday, February 9, 1992, the spirit of William Saroyan returned to New York as the subject of a program which encompassed the time of his life.

The New York premiere of Paul Kalinian's documentary film, "William Saroyan: The Man, The Writer," was the highlight of an afternoon devoted to the renowned Armenian-American author and playwright. The event, sponsored by the Hamazkain Armenian Educational and Cultural Association of New York in conjunction with the Armenian students clubs of New York University, Queens College, and Columbia University, took place at Benjamin Cardozo High School in Bayside, Queens. Over two hundred people were in attendance.

The program's focal point was the 16mm film, written, produced, and directed by Mr. Kalinian. In a one-hour chronological reflection on Saroyan's literary career and personal life, his story was told through



From l. to r., Barig Nalbantian, Hooshere Bezdikian, Mrs. Kalinian, Mr. Kalinian, Charles Mkhitarian, Lana Kazangian, George Berberian.

photographs, some film footage, interviews with the writer, and research compiled over six years. "William Saroyan: The Man, The Writer" spanned the entirety of his life, including a dramatic recreation of his family's forcible departure from their ancestral home and settlement in America during the difficult days of the early 20th century. Also shown were film clips of his later pilgrimage to Bitlis, from where his family originated.

Preceding the film showing were a lecture by Dr. Varkis Kionoian, a Professor Emeritus of English and Comparative Literature at Fairleigh Dickinson University in New Jersey, and several readings of Saroyan's works. Four pieces, including a humorous skit entitled, "Making Money," brief excerpts from various writings, "Our Days," in English and Armenian, and his celebrated challenge to "the powers of the world" regarding Armenia's survival, were chosen by Hamazkain organizer Herand Markarian to provide an overview of the diversity of styles found in Saroyan's writings. The student readers were Hooshere Bezdikian of Cardozo High School, Yeraz Markarian of Barnard College, and New York University Armenian Club executive members Barig Nalbantian and Lana Kazangian.

In one of the excerpts read by Yeraz Markarian, "Pebbles on the Beach," Saroyan wrote, "There is always somebody who will pick up a rock and remark how like a fish or a seal it is. It would be a lot more nearly accurate to say of a rock that it is simultaneously preposterously simple and profoundly mysterious..." Lecturer Kionoian made much the same argument about Saroyan's works in defense of harsh critiques by mid-century reviewers: "They said that Saroyan's writing lacked art and sophistication, but Saroyan gave voice during the '30s, the time of the Great Depression, to the American Dream. He gave hope to the people."

Near the end of the program, Mr. Charles Mkhitarian, chairman of the Eastern Regional Executive of Hamazkain, awarded a medal to Mr. Kalinian for his longstanding contribution to film and photography. Kalinian also spoke briefly in both English and Armenian about his documentary film.

Saroyan Committee chairman Ara Caprielian made the opening and closing remarks.