

## Saroyan Film Presented in Phoenix

By Adrina Shamamian

PHOENIX, AZ - On Sunday evening, May 19, 1996, the AGBU, Arizona Chapter and the Cultural Committee of the Armenian Apostolic Church of Arizona sponsored an evening of wonder and delight. Mr. Paul Kalinian and his daughter, Susie, made the trip from Fresno to Phoenix to show a film which Mr. Kalinian had made of the renowned writer, William Saroyan. Mr. Kalinian is the director/producer and writer of the film, called **William Saroyan: The Man, The Writer**, while Susie is his co-producer.

Mr. Kalinian is a gifted artist who uses film as his medium of expression. An artist is a person who can elicit sensations and passionate emotions from the observer. We might not be able to express these emotions but we can certainly understand and appreciate them. Mr. Kalinian, through his highly skilled craft of photography, elicited those feelings in us.

The hourlong film encompassed the life of William Saroyan from his early child-



Paul Kalinian and daughter Susie Kalinian (4th and 5th from right) with AGBU Phoenix Chapter committee members.

hood, to the loss at a very early age of his father, and his determination to become a writer after a visit to the public library, despite the lack of support of his family.

Mr. Mike Connors did much of the narration of the film but the most interesting parts of the film were the excerpts where Saroyan himself spoke, expressing his views, his ideas and basically his philosophy of life from the point of view of an Armenian.

As the film progresses, one is made acutely aware of the impediments Saroyan encoun-

tered on his journey up the ladder of fame. From childhood he was rejected in schools as too ethnic, too outspoken, too honest and quick to express an opinion which in those days could hardly be deemed politically correct. Standing alone, Saroyan fought for our right to say what we think as Armenians. And, because of him, today we are being heard.

We are Armenians...proud of our ethnicity, our language and our faith, but the world knows very little about us. Perhaps that is our fault. We tend to be exclusive and parochial, fearing that conceptually we might be misunderstood.

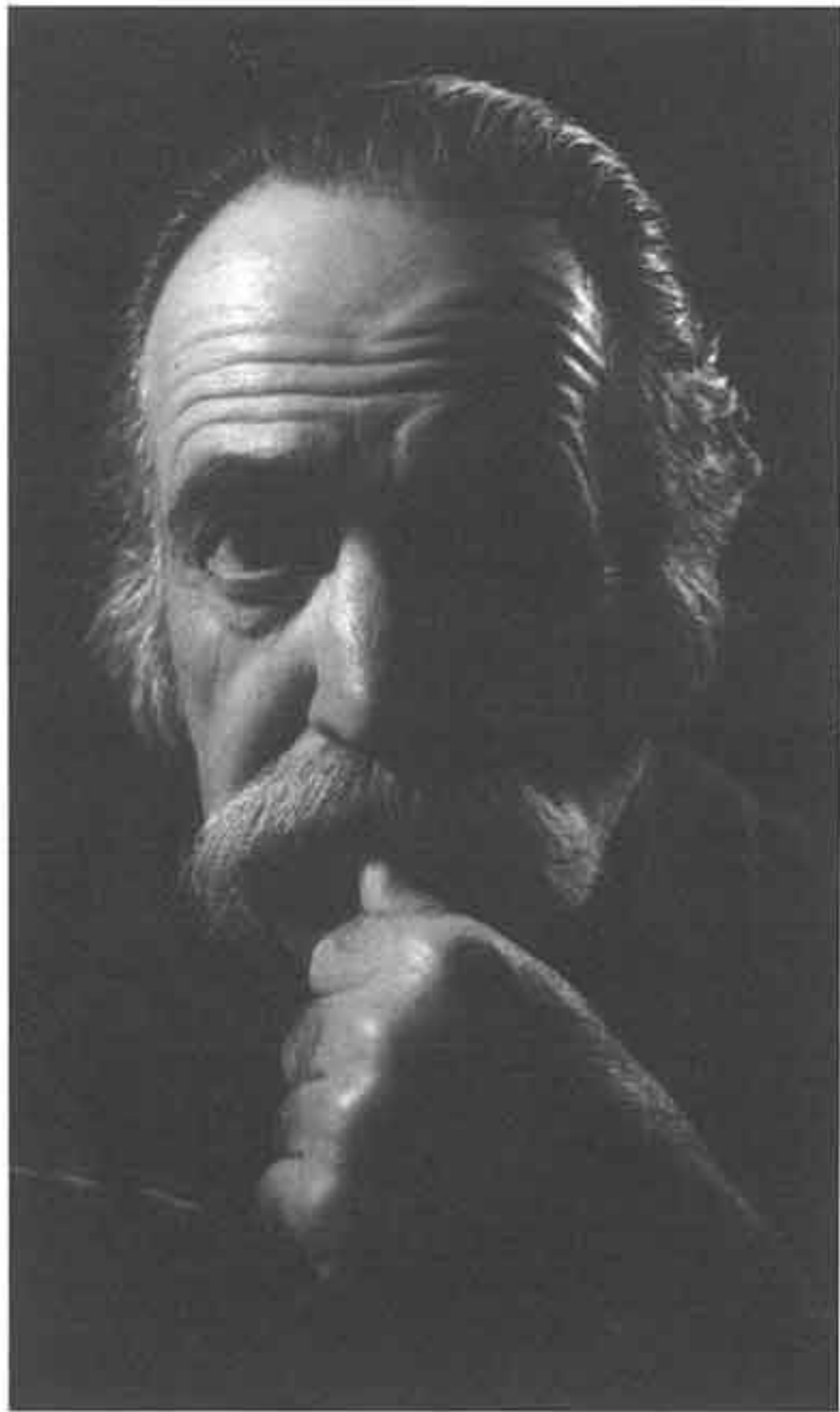
But...everyone who is literate in this world has heard the name William Saroyan who, through his writing, left us a legacy. He gave us a persona, an identity, a reputation which we never enjoyed before. We were no longer "the people God forgot" or the "starving Armenians." And Mr. Kalinian has fanned the fire of recognition, carrying the torch which Saroyan was forced to relinquish with his death.

Now it is our responsibility as Armenians to project our talents and our essence for the world to come to know us for what we are: **talented, creative and resourceful.**

Like the phoenix, we have risen from the ashes because of men like William Saroyan and Paul Kalinian who gave us gifts born of a tremendous understanding that was conceived from a love of community and pride of heritage.

The film has won five international awards, including the Gold Award for best documentary from the Philadelphia International Film Festival. The award-winning musical score in the film was composed by Mr. Paul Mazlikian.

The presentation was extremely well attended and concluded with a question-and-answer period, an opportunity to see and purchase memorabilia from the Saroyan archives and a gala reception.



William Saroyan

Photographed by Paul Kalinian ©