Armenian genocide focus of QC exhibit

BY RICH BOCKMANN

The U.S. government does not officially recognize the Armenian Genocide, but a new exhibition at Queens College has been curated with the intent of preserving the memories of the 1.5 million who lost their lives during the first genocide of the 20th century.

"Genocide: The Armenians 1915-1922" consists of posters, books and photos from the personal collection of Hratch Zadoian, a professor of political science at the college. Zadoian was born in Romania to Armenian parents.

Curator Evelyn Leahy, a native Armenian, called Zadoian a great storyteller and said the collection reveals a wealth of historical information and personal accounts that will astound even those who are familiar with the genocide.

"I suppose it was the first time when my professional venture became closely intertwined with a very personal sentiment," she said.

Zadoian said the Armenians had been living for a couple of millennia in what at the time was the Ottoman Empire. They represented a Christian minority and tensions rose further when the Young Turks, a revolutionary group, came to power in the Ottoman Empire in 1908.

Standing in front of the exhibition in the Barham Rotunda of the Rosenthal Library last week, Zadoian told the story of the begin-

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Vartan Zadoian (top c. and bottom r.) with orphaned children of the Armenian Genocide. Photo courtesy Hratch Zadoian
Exhibit

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ning of World War I which presented the opportunity to for the Young Turks to "deal with the Armenian problem."

"April 24, 1915, several hundred community leaders, intellectuals and members of Parliament were arrested and all killed. What begins is a set path of extermination of 250,000 or so Armenians in the Ottoman army. They were segregated into labor battalions and killed," he said.

Zadoian said the army then moved onto population centers such as Sepastia and Bitlis in present-day Turkey and Der-el-Zorn in present-day Syria, decimating the Armenian peoples there.

"As in other genocides, the women suffer the most," he said.

The documents of the exhibition include historical documents, such as a revised Bryce Report. James Bryce was appointed by the British government to write a report on the atrocities committed against the Armenians, which redacted the names of the victims. The revised report includes those names.

There are several posters commissioned by Near East Relief, the organization set up in 1915 at the urging of the U.S. ambassador to the Ottoman Empire in order to raise funds to assist the Armenians.

"There are generations of Armenians alive today because of Near East Relief," Zadoian said.

On the more personal side, there is a picture of Zadoian's father, Vartan, in 1920 in Turkey standing alongside the school of orphans he helped save. Between 1918 and 1922, he crisscrossed the Middle East rescuing and paying ransom for Armenian orphans.

Zadoian told an anecdote of his parents fleeing to Romania where they were wed: "On the night of their wedding, many youngsters came in calling [Vartan] 'father.' My mother was taken back!"

The professor said he is currently working on making the permanent collection at Queens College the premier academic resource on Armenian subjects.

"One of the greatest fears of people who died in genocide is no one will know. No one will remember," he said. "The community should get a sense of satisfaction that the denial has not worked. The world knows."
White, black residents leave borough: Census

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Water fees to go up 7.5% in Queens

BY RICH BOCKMANN

Get ready to pay more for your water.
On Friday, the city Water Board voted unanimously to approve the 7.5 percent water rate increase proposed by the city Department of Environmental Protection.

It is the first single-digit increase in five years, but 35 percent less than the figure the department had projected last year.

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Residents air grievances at Avella’s forum

Senator nixes using 311 for complaints

BY RICH BOCKMANN

Since taking office in January, state Sen. Tony Avella (D-Bayside) has repeatedly pledged to stay active in the local affairs of his constituents, and during his first town hall meeting last week, he placed himself — literally — between the city’s various departments and the people they serve.

Representatives from the 105th Precinct and a number of municipal departments sat on the auditorium stage of MS 172 in Bellerose last Thursday night as Avella stood alongside local civic associations and mediated questions and complaints from a frustrated crowd.

It did not take long to realize that city Department of Buildings spokesman Anthony Iuliano would have his work cut out for him.

"The Department of Buildings is the worst agency in the history of the city," Avella quipped. The senator said he was still in the process of distributing his first newsletter — a civic checklist that nearly 2,000 constituents had already returned and listed buildings, city Department of Environmental Protection and traffic issues as their major concerns.

Iuliano said that of the 7,500 complaints his department had received from Queens from January to April, 48 percent concerned illegal conversions and 39 percent were for work without permits.

Most residents expressed frustration with the city’s 311 complaint registration service.

"Never call 311," said Avella, who encouraged those with complaints to contact the agencies directly or alert their civic assoca-

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Charmed I’m Sure

Ashley Hechler has no fear holding an 18-year-old ball python snake during the Pets & Pals Party in Alley Pond Park. The event, which was sponsored by City Councilman Mark Weprin and organized by the Parks Department, included animal adoptions and a microchip clinic.

Photo by Steven Malecki