

Armenian Philanthropist Sarkis Acopian Passes Away

Sarkis Acopian was born in Tabriz, Iran on Dec 8, 1926 to Armenian parents who left Russia and Turkey and finally settled in Iran. He grew up as a Christian Armenian in Iran and later left that country, in 1945, to come to the United States to study Engineering at Lafayette College in Easton, Pennsylvania. His education was interrupted when he was drafted into the US Army. While stationed at Lackland Air Force Base in the Army Air Training Command in San Antonio, Texas, he met his future wife, Bobbye Seitze Mixon. He returned to Lafayette College after being honorably discharged and graduated in 1951 with a Bachelor of Science in Mechanical Engineering. During and after college, he worked for Weller Electric Corp and designed a power sander which became one of their main products.



Sarkis Acopian
1926-2007

Since his early childhood, he dreamed of operating his own business. In 1957, he took out a loan from a local bank and began his journey. That same year he designed and manufactured the first ever solar radio. This eventually led into the power supply business which is still operating today: Acopian Technical Company. From the early 1970s onward, Sarkis would commute between the company's manufacturing facilities in Easton, Pennsylvania and Melbourne, Florida by piloting his corporate-owned aircraft, a Piper Aztec, and later a Piper Navajo. By 1977, he was piloting the Cessna Citation jet. This was the only business jet approved for a single pilot, instead of the usual pilot and co-pilot. In 1981, Acopian Technical Company took delivery of the very last Rockwell Sabreliner jet manufactured.

Sarkis Acopian was often ahead of the times. He made over 200 skydiving jumps during the pioneering days of the sport in the early 1960s. He was also a frequent scuba diver during that same era. Ten years before surfboard leashes became standard equipment in the sport of surfing, he asked why surfers don't attach a cord between themselves and their surfboard so that when they fall off they don't need to swim to shore to get their board.

Sarkis Acopian was a very modest and civic-minded man who believed in giving back to society. He has made numerous donations to national and international causes which have included The Acopian Engineering Center at Lafayette College, the Acopian Center for Conservation Learning at Hawk Mountain Sanctuary, The Acopian Center for Ornithology at Muhlenberg College, as well as endowing the environmental education program at the American University of Armenia and the Florida Institute of Technology. Other major philanthropic endeavors have included the Nature Conservancy Acopian Bog Turtle Preserve, the St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church in Charlotte, North Carolina, built in memory of his beloved mother, Dr. Arax Acopian. Other important donations have included gifts to the Armenian General Benevolent Union, the Embassy of Armenia in Ottawa Canada*, the Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, the Armenian Apostolic Church of America, the Armenian Assembly of America, Columbia University, the State Theatre of Easton, the Easton National Canal Museum, The Children's Home of Easton and two churches in Armenia, St Hakop and St. Mesrob. His great sense of gratitude to his adopted country played a major part in his being the largest individual donor to the World War II Memorial in Washington, DC. He received the Ellis Island Medal of Honor, the St. Gregory the Illuminator Medal, and an honorary Doctor of Science degree from Muhlenberg College.

In the later years of his life, he assembled a team of ornithologists in Armenia and the US to work towards publishing a field guide on the birds of Armenia in hopes of introducing the newly independent former Soviet republic to the idea

of environmental conservation. "A Field Guide of Birds of Armenia" was published in 1997. The first accurate map of the newly independent Republic of Armenia was also published as a result of the Birds of Armenia Project.

Sarkis Acopian is survived by his wife of 59 years, Bobbye; two sons: Greg and his wife Karen, and Jeff and his wife Helen; six grandchildren and two great grandchildren. He is also survived by a younger sister Miriam Bradley in Plainview, NY and predeceased by his parents Dr. Grigor and Dr. Arax Acopian and by a sister; Eleanora Ordjanian in NY.

** In 1995 Sarkis Acopian purchased and donated to the Embassy of the Republic of Armenia in Canada a mansion in Ottawa, in memory of his parents, Doctors Grigor and Arax Acopian.*