

Artemis Topjian Nazarian

1932-2020

Artemis Nazarian of Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey died on April 9th, succumbing to complications of coronavirus infection. Artemis was born in Aleppo, Syria on January 31, 1932 to parents of Armenian descent, Nicholas and Marie Topjian (nee Sulahian). Her family emigrated to the United States in 1934 and settled in Watertown, MA where she grew up in the Great Depression among a close-knit, loving extended family.

Artemis was an outstanding student who excelled at Watertown High School. Although accepted to Radcliffe College, she went to Boston University on a scholarship and obtained her bachelor's degree cum laude; she was proud to be the first woman to graduate as an accountant from the College of Business Administration. After graduation, she worked at the firm of Haskins and Sells. During that time, she met her husband Nazar, originally from Lebanon, whom she married in 1954. The couple settled in the New York area where Nazar established his businesses, with Artemis being his in-house accountant.

Their daughter Seta was born in 1957 and son Levon was born in 1961. Artemis was a devoted mother who raised her children with kindness, intelligence, patience, humility, and sense of purpose. She also had a keen sense of humor and loved to tell jokes and stories. The stories, in particular, were legendary among her numerous friends and family members. She was the family historian and seemed to be able to speak with any Armenian she met for ten minutes and figure out how they were related to each other. A person of simple tastes, she loved crossword puzzles, jigsaw puzzles, baseball, and Hershey bars. She also was a prolific knitter, and many of her sweaters and baby blankets won local awards. Artemis also was an accomplished piano player who accompanied her brother Joe when he played violin, including two recitals carried on Boston radio stations.

Nazar and Artemis lived together in Englewood Cliffs, NJ for more than 60 years. As Nazar's businesses grew, so did his involvement in philanthropic activities. Although she did not seek recognition, Artemis was also an active philanthropist, both supporting her husband's projects as well having many of her own. A patron of the arts and a firm believer in the power of education to transform lives, she supported numerous scholarships to students worldwide to the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU). Her special interest in children culminated in the opening of the Artemis Nazarian Preschool of the AGBU Manoogian-Demirdjian school in Los Angeles. Artemis also created a scholarship at BU Business School with priority given for students of Armenia descent.

Another area of lifelong devotion was the Armenian Church. Her unwavering support of the Armenian Catholicosate in Etchmiadzin reflected the Sulahian side of her maternal family tree, which according to her, boasted numerous clergy. From New York to Etchmiadzin, Beirut to Los Angeles, Buenos Aires to Aleppo, there is bound to be a plaque, eponymous building sign or photo showing Artemis beaming with pride at the opening of a center, school or health facility, surrounded by grateful beneficiaries, or humbly receiving public honors by church leaders, dignitaries and officials from a cross section of Armenian institutions.

However, much of Artemis's generosity was on a more personal level: she gave money to countless people in need, drove elderly or incapacitated patients to their doctor's appointments through the organization FISH, and served for many years as treasurer of the Englewood Woman's Club.

Even with all of her accomplishments, Artemis's greatest pride and joy was always her family, especially her grandchildren: Seta's sons William and Nicholas, and Levon and his wife Claudia's children Matthew, Daniela, and Gregory. Artemis's relentless positivity, wisdom, wit and love will live in their hearts forever. When the grandchildren were younger, Artemis spent countless hours reciting nursery rhymes to them by memory. As they got older, they learned her famous stories and soaked up her practical wisdom and stoicism – exemplified by having her tonsils removed in the kitchen of her childhood home without anesthetic.

Artemis is survived by her husband Nazar, children, grandchildren her beloved brother and sister-in-law, Hrand Joseph and Karen Topjian as well as numerous cousins, nieces, and nephews. She was predeceased by her sister Leona Boodakian in 2008.

Artemis was the epitome of gracious and selfless generosity and a perpetual shining light in the world. Her spirit will live on in all who were fortunate to have known her. Donations in lieu flowers can be made to the AGBU Artemis Nazarian Memorial Scholarship for Performing Arts at www.agbu.org/artemisnazarian.

During these unforeseen times, kindly join us online to remember our dear Artemis at: www.rememberingartemis.com.