



Vartkess M. Balian

His beloved wife, Rita, his two sons, Sevag and Raffi, his daughter-in-law, Nairi, his four grandchildren, Aram, Nareg, Sareen, and Arya, his sisters, Haikouhi and Marie, and his nieces, Rita and Lena join in remembering and praying for the soul of Vartkess Balian. A devoted husband, father, grandfather, brother, and uncle, Vartkess dedicated his life to serving his family, his church, his country, and his Armenian heritage, always with dignity, humility, kindness, and generosity.

He was the son of Dikranouhi and Mardiros Balian, both survivors of the Armenian Genocide. He was a graduate of the American University of Beirut with a degree in Architecture and Civil Engineering and was selected by the faculty to receive the prestigious Penrose Award, given to the senior who demonstrated overall academic, athletic, and moral excellence.

Upon his graduation, Vartkess established his own architectural and engineering firm, which designed and built hospitals, schools, factories, community centers, and residential buildings in Lebanon. During the 1960s, Vartkess designed or built many of the Armenian schools that were established in Beirut. Vartkess brought his family to the United States in 1975 and settled in the metropolitan Washington, DC area in 1976. For over 30 years, he developed and built many communities, residential buildings, and homes throughout the area.

He was a member of St. Mary Armenian Apostolic Church and served as a Diocesan Delegate and as a Trustee of the William E. Doctor Scholarship Fund. In addition, he initiated, designed, fundraised, and led the effort to build the banquet hall, classrooms, and office space. For his many contributions to the Armenian Church, Vartkess was honored, along with his wife Rita, with the St. Nersess Shnorhali Medal given by His Holiness, Karekin II, the Catholicos of All Armenians. He was also a member of the Armenian Assembly Board from 1976-1982.

Vartkess and Rita established the AGBU Global Leadership Program, which has given opportunities to over 1000 Armenian university students for professional and personal growth during the previous 33 years. Vartkess was also elected to and served on the AGBU Central Board, including as President of AGBU America Board.

After the tragic earthquake in Armenia in 1988, Vartkess and Rita helped coordinate much needed U.S. humanitarian assistance to the devastated regions of Armenia. They initiated and supported many humanitarian and philanthropic projects in the homeland, including rebuilding schools and supporting the mission and work of orchestras, museums, art education centers, and universities.

Vartkess led the effort to completely renovate the Armenian Embassy in Washington, DC and took on the financial and oversight responsibility for maintaining the facility for 16 years. He was also a founding trustee and major benefactor of the Armenian American Wellness Center in Yerevan. He gave his time and efforts to oversee the renovation of the building that was donated by the Armenian government and supported by the U.S. government and U.S. medical institutions. To date, close to half a million women and men have received preventive medical care and over twelve thousand lives have been saved.