

Out of the Darkness—Oct. 16, 2005

Our social life always seems to bunch up on the weekends with more invitations than we have time to fulfill. I'm not complaining, just making an observation of how life is progressing for Marcia Evans and me here in Yerevan.

This past week was fairly routine—well, routine for us living overseas in a country that wants to make sure you are well taken care of.

I spent Monday at UMCOR, editing and writing. Tuesday through Friday morning meant school at the Agribusiness Teaching Center and then the UMCOR office. Wednesday night was Bible study with our friends Ada from Mexico City married to Aaron from Canada.



Friday evening included a get-together with Scottish-born Michael “Mick” Foster of the UMCOR agricultural department and Britain’s Laura Polaine-Brown of World Vision. Marcia had made Mick a quiche and I had turned some leftover vegetables into a cheesy soup. (I was also helping out Marcia, who had inadvertently inverted the kilo-to-pound ratio and ended up with over two pounds of Edam cheese rather than the half-pound she actually was hoping to buy.) ☺ Laura brought some lovely breads and Mick tossed in some salads from the deli, along with a little wine. It was a chance to visit and to talk, to laugh and to enjoy each other. We only recently met Laura and she is a wonderful person.

Tuesday night, however, we were invited to a “couch party.” Anahit Gasparyan got a new couch and chair, so she invited Armen Babajanyan, Zara Yesyan, Marcia and me over after work to see it. Of course, you cannot just see the couch and leave. We ate and ate. Anahit and her husband, Gagik, and Armen willingly shared stories with us about the “dark years” in the early 1990s. It was an interesting conversation that I had not really thought about before, so let me share just a bit of this new realization.

It drives me nuts when I walk through the UMCOR office and find offices with no one in them, but lights on. I turn them off. I think it’s so wasteful, and it is. However, a comment by the environmentalist I met last week on the ATC Lake Sevan trip and then the stories the other night give me a new perspective on light.

The environmentalist told me that even she keeps her lights on, though she knows better. That’s because of the years of darkness that the Armenians lived through in the early 1990s. In fact, during my work here last year a visiting UMCOR official from New York City commented about all the lights on around Republic



Square. Kara Harutyunyan told me stories about getting only a few hours of electricity daily, during which time people quickly cooked what food they had to eat for the next few days.

So this week, Armen shared how he met his wife, who was a neighbor to his uncle. He explained how his job permitted him a few liters of petrol and he would drive past the Medical University to see if Nazek was waiting for a mini-van to take her home. And how, in the midst of darkness, food storages and an exceptionally cold winter, they decided to marry the next spring. With

barely enough food to feed themselves every day, the Babajanyans made a traditional Armenian wedding that included lots of food, music, dancing and joy. Such hope in the face of darkness!

Then Anahit and Gagik pulled out a few videotapes of their children's birthday parties in the early 1990s, all recorded by candlelight because it was during the dark years. The love and laughter that reached from the screen into the brightly lit living/dining room—and the new couch—were inescapable. Consciously, you realized there was darkness and more struggles than you could see on TV. Yet these parents were like so many during that period or any time of struggle; they were trying to make life as normal as possible for their children.



Moonlight with the lights of Yerevan in the distance.

Gary and I were never blessed with children, yet we are children and we are children of God. Isn't it the way of parents to try to make life better, to shield children from some of life's harshest realities? Aren't there days when you wish you could still crawl into your mother's lap so she could take away the hurt or the scariness and fill you with a great sense of security and of being loved? Isn't that what He does for us? Isn't He the Light of the World, waiting for us to turn to Him and say, "I need a hug. Life is tough. Pull into you and help me feel safe and loved." And when you do that, He will take you in and help you through life's struggles—whether they are in the light of day or in the darkness. He fills you with His love and you, in turn, can let that love shine out from you to others who are still in the darkness.

Peace!

Story and photos by Pamela J. Karg