Armenian Interests

Special Edition - In Memory of Missak Haigentz

The Passing of a Noble Armenian Leader

Missak Haigentz Kupelian — A Life of Service, Dedication, and Legacy



Missak Haigentz Kupelian passed away on Saturday, October 17, 2026 at 8:48am in NJ

The passing of Missak Haigentz Kupelian marks the loss of a devoted Armenian leader, educator, journalist, and community servant whose life was defined by perseverance, conviction, and an unwavering commitment to his people and heritage. His legacy extends far beyond his many accomplishments. It lives in the institutions he served, the generations he inspired, and the Armenian identity he worked tirelessly to preserve.

Missak Haigentz Kupelian belonged to a generation shaped by the enduring consequences of the Armenian Genocide and the extraordinary resilience of its survivors and descendants. He understood that the suffering of the past must never be forgotten, but neither should it overshadow the strength, determination, and hope with which Armenians rebuilt their lives across the world. Throughout his life, he transformed that historical inheritance into a profound sense of responsibility—to serve his community, preserve its heritage, and help ensure that the Armenian story would continue to be told.

Haigentz was born on August 19, 1937, in Alexandria, Egypt, where he received his early education at the local Boghosian School and the French Lyceum. From an early age, he demonstrated a strong commitment to Armenian cultural and educational life. He became actively involved in the Dickran Yergat Armenian Cultural Association and dedicated eight years to teaching at a local Armenian school.

These formative years helped establish the principles that would guide him throughout his life: the importance of education, the preservation of Armenian identity, and the responsibility of every generation to pass its cultural inheritance to the next.

In 1963, Missak Haigentz Kupelian immigrated to the United States and settled in Fresno, California, where he assumed the position of editor of Nor Or. When the newspaper relocated to Los Angeles the following year, he continued in his editorial role.

Through his work at Nor Or, Haigentz became an important voice in Armenian community journalism. The newspaper, which continues to be published today, represents part of the enduring legacy of the Armenian press and its role in sustaining community life, encouraging public discussion, and connecting Armenians across generations.

Alongside his work responsibilities, Haigentz pursued higher education at night, ultimately culminating in Bachelor of Arts (graduating Summa Cum Laude) and Master of Arts degrees in Economics at Farleigh Dickinson University. Later, he enrolled at Seton Hall University School of Law and earned his Juris Doctor degree in 1979. His pursuit of knowledge reflected a lifelong determination to expand his abilities and prepare himself for greater responsibilities.

In 1968, Haigentz was invited to Detroit to serve as special assistant to the distinguished philanthropist Alex Manoogian. Two years later, in 1970, he was elected executive director of the Armenian General Benevolent Union (AGBU), serving from its New York office.

This appointment marked the beginning of a defining chapter in his life. For approximately two decades, Haigentz devoted himself to the work of the AGBU, one of the most important Armenian charitable and cultural organizations in the world. During those years, he visited numerous AGBU centers across different countries, gaining an exceptional understanding of the diverse communities that together formed the worldwide Armenian diaspora.

These journeys brought him into contact with Armenians whose experiences differed by geography and circumstance but whose commitment to their heritage remained deeply rooted. His work helped strengthen the connections among these communities at a time when preserving Armenian identity and sustaining national institutions were matters of profound importance.

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During this period, Haigentz also traveled to Soviet Armenia, where he was received and honored by His Holiness Vazken I, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians. This recognition reflected his place within the broader Armenian community and the significance of his service.

Haigentz lived and worked during a complex period in Armenian history, when Armenia remained under Soviet rule. He defended what he regarded as the accomplishments and progress achieved in Armenia during that era. His editorials expressed his convictions forcefully and sometimes provoked sharp criticism from those who disagreed with his positions. His opponents even referred to him as the "Red-Beaked Editor."

Yet Haigentz remained steadfast in expressing his views. He was a man of strong convictions who did not easily yield to pressure or intimidation. Whether praised or criticized, he believed in the importance of speaking his mind and defending the positions he considered right.

His story reminds us that public service and community leadership are not always free from controversy. They often require the courage to participate in difficult debates, to stand by one's convictions, and to accept the scrutiny that accompanies public life.

Whatever differences people may have had with his views, his dedication to Armenian affairs and his willingness to engage passionately in the issues of his time were unmistakable.

After retiring from the AGBU in the 1986, Haigentz embarked on another remarkable chapter of personal and professional development. Rather than retreat into retirement, he sought full use of his Juris Doctor degree and studied for and passed the bar examinations in both New Jersey and New York, and he went on to practice law.

This achievement spoke volumes about his character. At an age when many might have considered their professional journey complete, Haigentz chose to begin anew, embracing the challenge of rigorous legal study and another demanding profession.

His decision reflected qualities that had distinguished him throughout his life: intellectual curiosity, discipline, determination, and the conviction that there is always more to learn and more to contribute.

The milestones of Haigentz's life are impressive: his years as an educator, his work in journalism, his leadership at the AGBU, his academic achievements, and his later career in law. Yet these accomplishments represent only the visible portion of a much larger story.

Beneath the titles and professional achievements lay a lifetime of experiences, sacrifices, relationships, and contributions that cannot be fully captured in a biography. There were undoubtedly countless conversations, personal acts of kindness, difficult decisions, and moments of perseverance that helped shape the man he became and the lives of those around him.

His life was part of a much larger Armenian journey—the journey of a people who endured unimaginable tragedy, lost homes and loved ones, scattered across continents, and nevertheless found the strength to rebuild. They established families, businesses, schools, churches, charitable organizations, and cultural institutions in new homelands. They carried Armenia with them, not merely as a distant geographical place, but as a living inheritance of language, faith, memory, and identity.

Missak Haigentz Kupelian was among those who devoted their lives to sustaining that inheritance.

He understood that preserving a people's history requires more than remembering the past. It requires action in the present. It requires educating the young, supporting community institutions, maintaining cultural traditions, encouraging intellectual life, and ensuring that future generations understand who they are and where they come from.

Through his many years of service, Haigentz contributed to that enduring mission.

The true measure of a person's legacy is not found solely in the positions he held, the degrees he earned, or the accomplishments recorded in the pages of history. It is also found in what he helped preserve, the people he served, and the example he left behind.

Haigentz's life reminds us that heritage survives when people are willing to take responsibility for it. It survives when teachers pass on knowledge, when journalists keep communities informed, when leaders strengthen institutions, and when individuals dedicate their talents to something greater than themselves.

His generation carried the memories of a wounded homeland while helping build a future for Armenians throughout the world. Their achievements were not always celebrated, and many of their contributions may never be fully documented. Yet their work became part of the foundation upon which succeeding generations continue to build.

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There is still much more to learn and tell about Haigentz's life. The experiences known to us are only the surface of a deeper story—one of perseverance, service, personal sacrifice, and devotion to a community whose history demanded both remembrance and renewal.

As we mourn his passing, we also celebrate the life he lived and the legacy he leaves behind. We remember an Armenian educator who understood the importance of passing knowledge to the next generation; a journalist who devoted himself to the written word; a leader who served the AGBU for approximately two decades; and a man whose pursuit of education and professional growth continued throughout his life.

Above all, we remember a man who devoted a substantial part of his life to the Armenian people and their enduring heritage.

Missak Haigentz Kupelian inherited a history marked by suffering, yet he chose to contribute to a legacy marked by resilience.

He inherited the memories of a homeland whose people had endured profound loss, yet he helped sustain a heritage that could not be erased.

He understood the responsibility of remembrance, and through his life's work, he helped ensure that the Armenian story would continue to be told.

His passing leaves a void among those who knew him and within the community to which he devoted so many years. But the significance of his life does not end with his departure. It continues in the institutions he served, the history he helped shape, and the generations who will inherit the cultural legacy he worked to preserve.

May his memory be a blessing to his family, his friends, his colleagues, and the entire Armenian community.

May the story of his life inspire future generations to serve with dedication, to stand by their convictions, to pursue knowledge with determination, and to preserve the heritage entrusted to them.

Missak Haigentz Kupelian's life was a testament to the enduring strength of the Armenian spirit. His journey has ended, but his legacy of service, perseverance, and devotion will remain.

May he rest in eternal peace. May his memory remain eternal.

Missak Haigentz Kupelian is survived by his beloved son, Dr. Missak Haigentz, Jr., and his spouse, Madeline ; his brother, Herair Kupelian, his wife, Nora ; and his sister, Aida Poladian.

He also leaves behind his cherished nieces and nephews: Tamar Poladian Perron, her husband, John, and their children, Grace, Jackson, and Faith; Haig Kupelian, his wife, Talin, and their daughters, Katya and Lori; Arto Poladian, his wife, Leticia, and their children, Nishelle and Noah; and Artin Kupelian, his wife, Rachelle, and their sons, Stallone and Nikolas.

Funeral Services

The Funeral Service will be held on Thursday, October 22, 2026, from 10:30 to 11:30 AM at St. Leon Armenian Church in Fairlawn, NJ.

A private burial service will follow for family members only.

In Lieu of Flowers

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in his memory to support cancer research at Rutgers Cancer Institute.

Donations may be made online at: https://raise.rutgersfoundation.org/Haigentz

Condolences may be sent to:

Missak Haigentz, Jr.
210 North Woods Dr, South Orange, NJ 07079
mhaigentz@gmail.com

Letter of Condolence from His Grace Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan, Primate of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America

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DIOCESE OF THE ARMENIAN
CHURCH OF AMERICA (EASTERN)
BISHOP MESROP PARSAMYAN, PRIMATE

To the Family & Loved Ones of Missak Haigentz Kupelian

It is with deep sadness that I learned of the passing of our beloved Missak Haigentz Kupelian. On behalf of the clergy and faithful of the Eastern Diocese of the Armenian Church of America, and on my own behalf, I extend my heartfelt condolences to his son, Dr. Missak Haigentz, Jr., and to all his family members, friends, and loved ones.

With his passing, our Armenian community has lost a distinguished intellectual, a devoted servant of our people, and a remarkable gentleman whose life was dedicated to preserving and strengthening our Armenian heritage.

Throughout his long and meaningful life, Haigentz served our people in many capacities—as an educator, journalist, editor, community leader, and attorney. His decades of service to the Armenian General Benevolent Union, his dedication to Armenian journalism, and his lifelong pursuit of knowledge reflected his deep conviction that our language, culture, history, and identity are sacred treasures entrusted to our care.

I was personally blessed to spend time with Haigentz on several occasions, particularly at the home of our dear Krikor and Arpi Arslanian, where we enjoyed wonderful dinners and conversations in the company of friends. I will always cherish those evenings. I especially admired his impeccable Armenian, his extraordinary knowledge of Armenian history and culture, his sharp intellect, and his remarkable memory. Listening to him was always a pleasure and an education. He spoke with the wisdom of a man who had witnessed much of our modern Armenian history and had himself contributed to it. His conversations were filled with fascinating stories, thoughtful observations, and a profound love for our people.

What impressed me most was that, despite his many accomplishments, he never lost his intellectual curiosity or his passion for Armenian life. He belonged to a generation that understood Armenian identity not simply as something to inherit, but as something to protect, cultivate, and faithfully pass on to future generations.

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The Holy Scriptures remind us: "Blessed are the dead who die in the Lord… for their deeds follow them" (Revelation 14:13). These words offer us comfort today. A life devoted to service, learning, and the well-being of others does not simply disappear with death. Its fruits remain in the lives it has touched, the institutions it has strengthened, and the generations it has inspired.

As we mourn the passing of our dear Haigentz, we also give thanks to Almighty God for the gift of his long and fruitful life. His earthly journey has come to an end, but his contributions to our Armenian community and the memories he leaves in our hearts will endure.

May our risen Lord Jesus Christ receive the soul of His servant Missak into His heavenly kingdom and grant him eternal rest among the righteous. May the Holy Spirit, the Comforter, bring peace and consolation to his beloved son, family, and all who mourn his passing.

May his memory remain ever bright, and may the example of his devotion to our people continue to inspire generations to come.

Յաւերժ յիշատակն արդարոց օրհնութեամբ եղիցի:
May the memory of the righteous be blessed forever.

With heartfelt sympathy and prayers,



Bishop Mesrop Parsamyan
Primate

October 17, 2026

