

Faces of Armenians tell tragic story to reporter

By Sandra Armbruster
staff writer

For Bill Gallagher, the greatest sense of tragedy in earthquake-stricken Armenia didn't come from viewing the rubble of buildings. "You could see it in their faces. They were just numb as they dug through their possessions," the WJBK-TV reporter said.

Gallagher spent seven days in Armenia as a news reporter for the Southfield television station and as a crew member who helped erect shelter for the homeless. He returned Friday, Dec. 29, from a sometimes harrowing, often heartwarming journey.

GALLAGHER WAS part of a crew of 14 people, including two building specialists, some American doctors and "State Department types."

The journey was delayed many times, some by weather, others by the difficulty to the emergency and by trying to travel halfway around the world.

Before reaching Armenia, Gallagher's plane was in Frankfurt on the day of the crash of Pan-Am Flight 103. He phoned home with reports from the flight's origin point.

"I had the dumb luck to be in the right place at the right time," he said.

But the real right place was Armenia, and Gallagher eventually arrived in Yerevan, traveling to the town of Spitak in the Bambak Mountains. They are part of the Caucasus range, west of the Black Sea.

Meeting with an Armenian interpreter, the crew took its 20 tons of

supplies by busload up 6,000 feet on winding mountain roads.

"WE WERE greeted by the Soviet Army. They had a 20-by-30-foot tent for us. It looked like something out of 'MASH.' There were 16 of us in the tent. Temperatures reached in the 20s during the day but went below zero at night. We had just a faulty coal heater in there," Gallagher said.

"The tent was set up on a cabbage patch, so it wasn't level. When someone fell out of bed at night, there was a domino effect."

It was, however, the people whom Gallagher remembers best.

"The first night we were there, they killed a lamb to feed us," he said. "They were very gracious to us. In their estimation, we were all crazy (to be there)."

While estimates vary, residents say that one-third to one-half of the population was killed, according to Gallagher. Very few buildings were left standing; the ones that were left were unsafe.

So Gallagher's crew helped build a community center in the heart of downtown using a plastic pipe and sheeting technology used to cover boats in the winter.

"WE GOT a lot of laughs," he said. "We said, 'What do you need?' So we built the community center and one of the first organizations to move in was the local Communist Party."

The "real heroes" of the expedition, according to Gallagher, were Bill Beckerstaff of Gibraltar and Mike Stenberg of Traverse City. They are in the boat protection business and led the construction of housing for workers who will rebuild the city several miles from its origin.

"The severe wind in the mountainous area required building modifications from the original design, but some 10,000 square feet of shelter area was built, with workers moving right in."

"The whole idea was to teach them how to use the technology," Gallagher said.

THE TV reporter, who had never previously handled a video camera, said his trip was "far and away the most difficult experience" of his career.

"It makes you view life in a different perspective," he said. "It was good in a small way to help. It was more symbolic of America reaching out to Armenians."

Sharing that spirit were two Cos-



Bill Gallagher of Farmington Hills (left) with Mike McPhail of Clawson edits one of the 28 Armenia for showing on WJBK-TV Channel 2 in Southfield. video tapes he brought back from his trip to

sacks who guarded the tent in 12-hour shifts, sipped vodka and ogled a Playboy magazine.

"It's not every night you can camp out with the Soviet Army," Gallagher said.

GALLAGHER RECORDED the crew's experiences and conditions in Armenia on film whenever time allowed. Chemical heating wraps were

used to keep the camera from freezing up. He ended up with 28 tapes, parts of which were shown on TV-2 last week and later will probably be made into a television special.

Crew members were five days into their Armenia experience before being able to get word out that they were safe.

On the trip back, they were "virtually stowaways," Gallagher said.

"It was wild. But we got out."

The plane landed 15 hours later in Shannon, Ireland, giving Gallagher on his only visit to the Emerald Isle a chance to quaff a couple in a local pub "for his heart." The plane eventually landed in Miami.

Looking back on the experience, Gallagher said he just feels privileged to have done it. "It was a good overture," he said.

carrier of the month Farmington



Kevin Kopacz

Kevin Kopacz, 14, delivers the Farmington Observer in Westbrook Manor subdivision. He has been delivering the Observer since May 1986.

The North Farmington High School ninth grader's favorite subjects are math and science. His hobbies are making model rockets and yock and gem collecting. He is a member of the marching and symphony bands.

Earning money and meeting new people are some of the things Kevin has learned on his route.

Kevin is the son of John and Sandy Kopacz. He has two sisters, Lisa, 17, and Kristen, 10.

If you want to be a Farmington Observer carrier, please call 591-0500

NOTICE
TO: GEORGE CUMMING AND OTHER INTERESTED PARTIES
That the B-45 was listed to George Cumming on October 1, 1988. The contents of said No. 11 B-45, at Your Office of Farmington Hills, 3475 Grand Haven, Farmington Hills, will be sold on February 9, 1989, at 1:00 P.M. to satisfy Your Office of Farmington Hills' lien when this lien is satisfied before the sale date. The terms will be available to the bidder before the sale on Feb 9, 1989.
The contents of this No. B-45 will be available for inspection between the hours of 9:00 A.M. and 5:00 P.M. on February 7, 1989 and on February 8, 1989, at the office of the Macmillan and Hornbeck.
William H. Pichers
Your Office of Farmington Hills
3475 Grand Haven
Farmington Hills, MI 48331
1/12/89 January 5 and 12, 1989

S.A.T.
Improve scores with our proven 24 hr. course. Build skills and reduce test anxiety.
Individualized help in math, reading, vocabulary and test-taking skills.
EXTRA HELP AVAILABLE AT NO EXTRA CHARGE.
Students taking our course report substantial increases. Call today. Limited enrollment. Classes begin Jan. 29th 626-8825
THE HUNTINGTON LEARNING CENTER
2700 Huntington Lakes Center, Inc.

Your Choice

Orchard Place Ctr. Store - Only - Orchard Lk. Rd., S. of 14 Mi., Farmington Hills

GOING OUT OF BUSINESS

LOST OUR LEASE EVERYTHING MUST GO!

• Winter Sportswear • Winter Coats • Spring Sportswear • Summer Sportswear

50% to 80% OFF

*Special Fri. Hours - Jan. 13th - 8:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.

LISTED BELOW ARE JUST A FEW OF THE FABULOUS SAVINGS

Fundamental Things Career Skirts 4⁹⁹ orig. '32	Rhoda Lee Career Blouses 4⁹⁹ orig. '20	Holiday Fashion Sweaters 6⁹⁹ orig. '24-'30	Twill Fashion Shorts 7⁹⁹ orig. '22	Challis Fashion Skirts 9⁹⁹ orig. '30
Sag Harbor French Canvas Pants 14⁹⁹ orig. '30	Haggar Corduroy Pants 14⁹⁹ orig. '34	Levi Denim Jeans 16⁹⁹ orig. '40	100% Wool Lined Blazers 29⁹⁹ orig. '84-'100	Cross Country Career Suits 39⁹⁹ orig. '100-'146
Wool Long Dress Coats 49⁹⁹ orig. '150-'180	Warm Wool Pantcoats 49⁹⁹ orig. '128-'168	Misty Harbor Zip-lined Raincoat 59⁹⁹ orig. '150	Nell Flowers Winter Coordinatates 70% off	Personal Winter Coordinatates 70% off
Russ Spring Sportswear 80% off	Chaus Winter Sportswear 80% off	Cos Cob Winter Sportswear 80% off	Evan Picone Dressy Sportswear 80% off	Liz Claiborne Spring Sportswear 80% off

• Orchard Place Ctr. - Orchard Lk. Rd., S. of 14 Mi., Farmington Hills - Special Hrs. Fri. 8:00 to 9:00