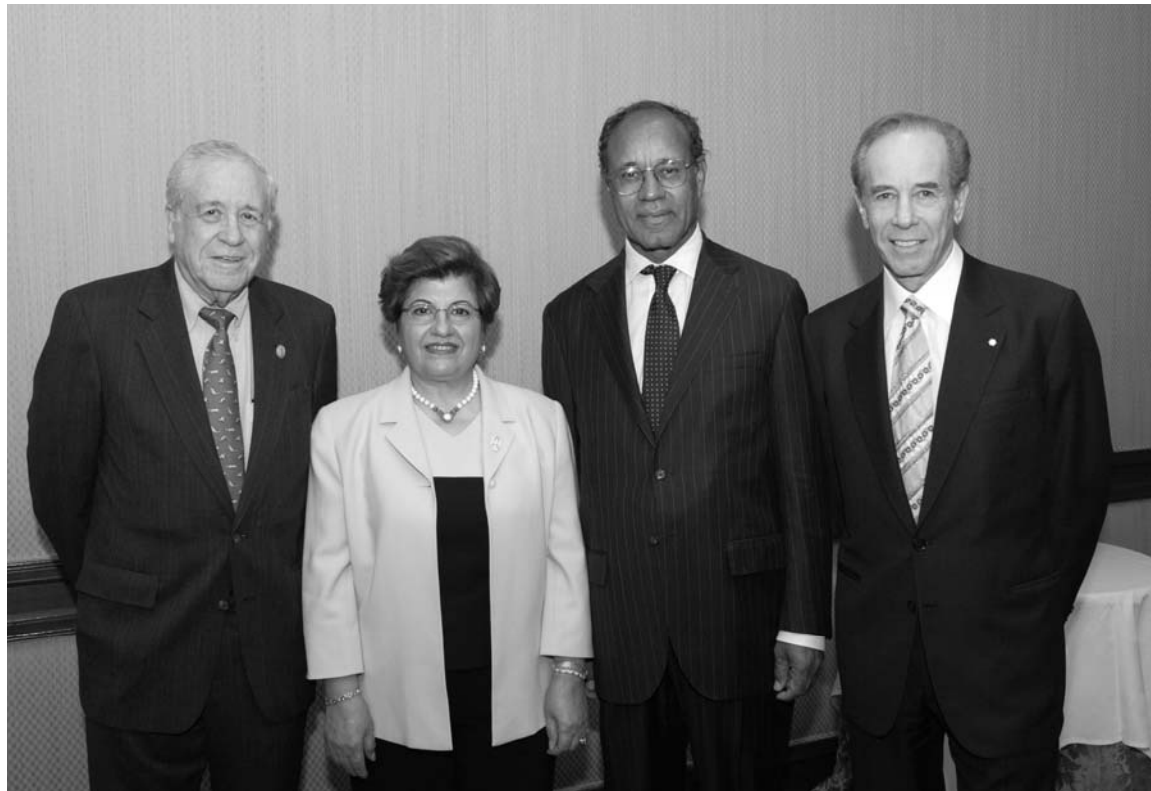


2003 Award Recipients for Cancer Advocates Given by the International Spirit of Life Foundation in Washington, DC

By Kristin L. Rugroden

WASHINGTON, DC - Rita S. Balian, President and Chief Volunteer Officer of the *Armenian American Cultural Association (AACA)*, received the **2003 Spirit of Life Foundation's Cancer Advocacy Award** this year in Washington, DC. As one of four recipients in different fields of cancer achievement, Ms Balian received the honor in recognition of her outstanding contributions in the fight against cancer by establishing and supporting the work of the *Armenian American Wellness Center (AAWC)* in Armenia.

In 2002, the Spirit of Life Cancer Advocacy Award was given to **President George Bush Sr. and Barbara Bush**. The same award, given to Rita Balian this year, reads as follows...



The 2003 awards recipients are L to R: Bernard Fisher, MD, for the Cancer Research Award; Rita Balian, for the Cancer Advocacy Award; Herald Freeman, MD, for the Clinical Care Award; and Isadore Sharp for the Distinguished Service Award

2003 Spirit of Life Awards Celebration Cancer Advocacy Award

Rita S. Balian

Recognized by the International Spirit of Life Foundation and the Washington Cancer Institute at Washington Hospital Center for her leadership in the field of cancer. This award recognizes that the recipient's work is consistent with and works towards the mission of the International Spirit of Life Foundation, to **ignite a global response to cancer.**

Acknowledged and presented this 24th day of September in the year 2003 and attested to by the signatures representing the International Spirit of Life Foundation and Washington Cancer Institute

Lawrence L. Lessin, MD, MACP
Medical Director, Washington Cancer Institute

Joseph R. Simone
Co-Founder, International Spirit of Life Foundation
Chair, Washington Cancer Institute Leadership Board



The Spirit of Life award statue in bronze

Rita Balian has been instrumental in bringing the latest prevention techniques for breast and cervical cancers to Armenia and in educating the people of Armenia on the importance of early detection of cancer. Her efforts as the Founder and Co-President of the *Armenian American Wellness Center (AAWC)* have revolutionized

the way Armenian women look at and react to breast and cervical cancers.

The Wellness Center and its two Satellite Clinics offer mammography and cervical cancer screening, as well as basic gynecological services and medical outreach missions to the regions. The Center also

also has a pathology laboratory for histology and cytology. Additionally, the **Wellness Center** conducts public awareness programs about the importance of early detection, teaches women to perform monthly breast self examinations, stresses the value of annual clinical check-ups for

preventive health care and organizes yearly health walks in Yerevan.

Over 47,000 women have been screened since 1997 and the lives of over 1,200 women have been saved through early detection of breast and cervical cancers.



Rita Balian with her 94-year-old mother, Marie Simonian, at the Ceremony



Vartkess and Rita Balian holding the hard copy of the Congressional Record Tribute presented by Congressman Frank Pallone in the 108th Congress, First Session of the House of Representatives

"Ms. Balian's individual effort has ignited a passion and hope in many women in Armenia and the region," says Joseph Simone, Chairman and CEO of the International Spirit of Life Foundation. Dr. Lawrence Lessin, the Medical Director of the Washington Cancer Institute, has echoed these sentiments: "We are all inspired by her major accomplishments and dedication to the continued fight against cancer. She serves as a superb example to all of us." Subsequently, Ms. Balian has been asked to serve as a member of the Board of Delegates for the International Spirit of Life Foundation.

The recognition of Rita Balian's work by the Spirit of Life Foundation was complemented on that same day when she received a Citation from Rep. Frank Pallone, with a Congressional Record Tribute. In the Tribute, he stated that "Rita is an extraordinary person who gives significant time and personal resources to see that the rate of cancer in Armenia is significantly reduced."

This year's other recipients were **Isadore Sharp**, Founder, Chairman & CEO of Four Seasons Hotels and Resorts and the Founder of the Terry Fox Foundation, who raised 350 million dollars for cancer research. He received the **Merium Ann Simone Distinguished Service Award**. **Bernard Fisher, MD**, world-famous research scientist, Distinguished Service Professor at the University of Pittsburgh and Past Chairman & Scientific Director of the National Surgical Adjuvant, received the Cancer Research Award for his Breast and Bowel Research Project. **Harold Freeman, MD**, Associate Director of National Cancer Institute, Director of NCI Center to Reduce Cancer Health Disparities at the National Institutes of Health, Director of Surgery at North General Hospital, and Medical Director for Ralph Lauren Center for Cancer Care and Prevention received the **Clinical Care Award**.

The Spirit of Life Awards Celebration sponsored by the International Spirit of Life Foundation and the Washington Cancer Institute annually recognizes leaders in cancer research, advocacy and philanthropy. The late Merium Ann Simone established the Foundation to address the disparities between cancer care and management. Two years later, Ann was diagnosed with a rare, terminal form of liver cancer.

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L to R: Rita Balian, awards recipient with Joseph Simone, co-founder and CEO of International Spirit of Life Foundation

She was the first woman in the world to receive stem cell treatment for hard tumors at the National Institute of Health. Ann experienced a positive response during the final stages of treatment, but ultimately lost her battle. Ann's story of strength and courage, and her commitment to the research and awareness regarding cancer serves as a constant reminder to those still fighting.

Ann's husband, **Joseph R. Simone**, as chairman and co-founder of the International Spirit of Life Foundation, continues his wife's legacy as a dedicated humanitarian committed to the health and well-being of people everywhere. Joe's passion for this cause stems from being a two-time cancer survivor, the loss of his wife Ann to the disease and the struggle he witnesses as his two-year-old grandson fights leukemia.

Headquartered in Washington, DC, the International Spirit of Life Foundation and the Washington Cancer Institute ignite the collaboration

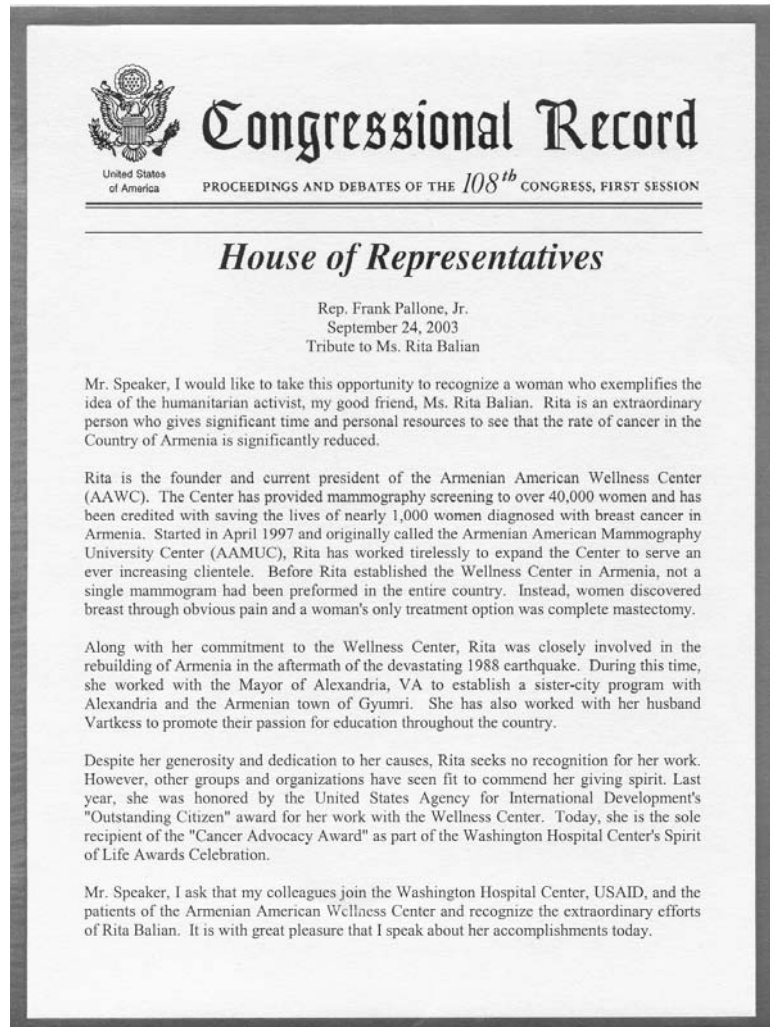
of prominent researchers, advocates and visionaries from across the world working to advance the prevention, treatment and management of cancer. The Foundation serves as a catalyst for global dialogue to unify research and treatment efforts and to recognize and celebrate the international achievements of those like Ms. Balian who have been, and continue to be, courageous in the fight against this disease.

The Award Ceremony held at the Four Seasons Hotel in Washington, DC, brought together over 400 medical, business and community leaders, members of cancer advocacy organizations, philanthropists, members of the health-care community and many American and international dignitaries. It celebrated the individual and collective efforts of significant leaders in the fight against cancer. H.E. Arman Kirakosian, the Armenian Ambassador to the U.S., Congressman Frank Pallone, and Hon. Esther Coopersmith, among others, were

present to celebrate Ms. Balian's accomplishments.

The Award consists of a plaque and a hand-cast bronze statue in the likeness of the original, sculpted by Daniel Chester French, who also sculpted the seated statue of Abraham Lincoln in the Lincoln Memorial in Washington, DC. The bronze statue stands slightly taller than an Oscar, and weighs so much as to be unwieldy. As the logo for the International Spirit of Life Foundation, the statue exemplifies the organization, its work and the many lives that have been affected by cancer. The statue also embodies the vision, passion and courage evident in all cancer patients, their families and caregivers.

For further information regarding the Armenian American Cultural Association and the Armenian Wellness Center, interested persons may write to usaca@aol.com. For more info. on the International Spirit of Life Foundation, go to www.spiritoflifefoundation.org



L to R: Lawrence Lessin, MD, Medical Director Washington Cancer Institute; Mistress of Ceremonies, Roberta Baskin, Senior Correspondent for PBS Program "NOW with Bill Moyers"; Rita Balian, receiving her Cancer Advocacy Award; and Elmer Huerta, MD, MPH, Founder and Director of the Cancer Preventorium at Washington Cancer Institute



Rita Balian - second from the left - surrounded by her close friends. L to R are: Hon. Esther Coopersmith; Arsho Tutundjian, who flew all the way from Qatar, and Michele Lemmon, wife of former US Ambassador to Armenia



L to R are: Sonia Crow, AAAC Vice President; Stephanie Kantor, Director of Development Communications at the Washington Hospital Center Foundation; Rita Balian, award recipient; and Marie Balian, AACA Treasurer