

## THE MANY FACETS OF TOM BOZIGIAN

By

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I have just interviewed a dynamo of energy -- a most versatile human being - a legend. Chatting informally before the actual interview began, I had an inkling of what I was about to hear. We had talked on another occasion, and I had become aware of the multiplicity of his interests. Now I asked, "Which one of you shall we start with, Tom?" But he only smiled with that impish, enigmatic smile of his, and left me to struggle with the order of things. O.K. this is your life, Tom.

Up to age 2-1/2 life was most pleasant for Tom and his young brother, both born in Los Angeles of a Bulgarian mother and a Soviet-Armenian father, who was in the international delicatessen and import business and doing very well. But the sudden death of his father brought about many changes.

The family moved to Fresno, and it is in that city's Turkish Armenian community that Tom spent his childhood, adolescence and young adulthood. Subsequently his mother remarried and in time Tom acquired four half brothers.

### Tom -- The Educator

Everything about Tom is generous --- in full measure. The same principle applies to his education. If one Bachelor of Arts degree is good --- two are better --- so he has one in Industrial Arts Education and the other in Languages with Russian the major and English a minor. His Master of Arts degree is in Education, and all are from Fresno State.

Tom has a California Teachers Credential and has taught Russian for three years at Fresno City College. At present he teaches Russian occasionally, through the Pasadena School System.

### Tom -- The Athlete

Throughout high school and junior college Tom was active and outstanding in sports. He was on both schools' football teams, and he played soccer with the Fresno Olympic Club, but he feels that his preferred sport was volleyball. He was All-American on the National Team in 1967, which won the Fresno National Championship that year.

Volley Ball was going to become his major endeavor. He came

to Los Angeles in the spring of 1968 to concentrate on making the Olympic Volley Ball Team which was to play in Mexico City. An injury to his knee ended that dream.

Of course Tom is still involved in sports, but now it is a recreational pursuit. He belongs to Handball and Tennis clubs and plays every summer in volley ball tournaments.

### Tom -- The Musician

Music has been part of Tom throughout his entire life. I suspect his first baby cry was a rhythmic delight. This keen sense of rhythm manifests itself in everything Tom does. He comes by it quite naturally. His mother is a musician, also an entertainer, and has taught piano all these many years. His brother is a professional entertainer, a singer-musician, whose chief instrument is the guitar. Tom studied piano under his mother's tutelage for several years, but his main instrument has been the drum.

Tom got started drumming at a very young age with a Turkish-Armenian orchestra in Fresno. Throughout his school years he played the drum with the school orchestras, at Armenian and other ethnic functions, and also in night clubs. His interests were primarily in the music of the Balkans and the Middle East. At present Tom plays the drum at the Fez Restaurant Saturday nights, is in constant demand to play with the various ethnic orchestras, and teaches drumming to students at all levels. If interested -- contact Tom.

### Tom -- The Dancer

Tom cannot recall when he did not dance. His grandfather was an excellent dancer in Armenia, so was his father, and Tom's interest and participation was a reflection of the important role dance played in the Fresno Armenian community. But the great impetus came during 1955-56 when the Tanec Troupe came to Fresno to perform. Tom was at once amazed, enchanted, and baffled. There was a group from Macedonia and south Yugoslavia executing movements that were so similar to the Armenian dances he knew. He began to realize the tremendous influence the Turks had exercised on the cultures of all these neighboring countries, and he became eager to explore and research.

But of course it was the knee injury 12 years later which forced Tom to make a major decision. He had to re-evaluate the direction of his future pursuits. He chose to concentrate on Dance, and this plan he has followed diligently. He has been teaching dance at the Los Angeles coffee houses --- The Intersection - Cafe Danssa - Zorba the Greek - Scorpios, and others. He has taught at the San Diego State Folk Dance Conference 1970 and will be there again this summer and he has taught at Federation Institutes including the Palomar weekends in '69 and '70.

### What Now, Tom?

Along with the decision that Dance would become Tom's major

endeavor, came the realization of the value of further study. Someone suggested to Tom that he should consider returning to Armenia to study the folk dances and culture of the Caucasus. This has become Tom's goal, and he is involved in a rigid program to make it possible.

He is preparing to leave for Soviet-Armenia by the end of 1971 or early in 1972 at the latest. To that purpose he has been studying ballet and is now in his second year; he has been taking private lessons in general music; he is involved in a gymnastic club program; he is studying Spanish and Yugoslavian. Of course he speaks Russian and Armenian fluently. And if by now you are wondering how this man manages to work --- and work he must -- there is no benefactor -- and also continue with his varied studies, please add that he is a member of the Armenian Folklore Ensemble of Los Angeles ---- an ethnic folk dance performing group.

In Armenia Tom plans to study the culture and the language in depth. He will also study the country's history and literature. This will be in the capitol at Yerevan and requires enrollment as a serious student. He will also join a State Dance Group and study the dances of the various folk regions of Armenia and the Caucasus. The program will include choreography and staging and music.

Yes, this is your life, Tom. How many lives do you plan to cram into one lifetime? Where do you find the extra hours to add to our human 24 hour day? You have a goal --- you want to have a specialty in a world that demands specialization --- and a specialist you will become, no question about that.

But, Tom, we have just gotten to know you -- we miss you already. If you must go -- please hurry back.