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NEIGHBORS

### Showing is part of festival's events

BY PAULA LLOYD  
STAFF WRITER

To those who never met Pulitzer Prize-winning author and Fresno native William Saroyan, and to those who knew him well, the screening of a film on his life is a highly anticipated event.

"I've been real excited about doing it because it's probably about the best introduction to Saroyan," said Ray Silvia, librarian of the California Room in the Fresno Library's central branch. Silvia arranged for the film to be shown as part of the William Saroyan Festival that runs through May 5.

"William Saroyan: The Man, the Writer" will be shown at 7:30 p.m. April 19 and at 2:30 p.m. April 21 in the Fresno Art Museum's Bonner Auditorium. Admission is free.

The hour-long film by Fresno photographer and filmmaker Paul Kalinian chronicles Saroyan's life from his birth in Fresno Aug. 31, 1908, to his death May 18, 1981, at age 72, in his hometown.

Lydia Kuhn, manager of adult services at the central library, got to know Saroyan during his many visits to her desk to autograph parts of the library's collection of his works.

"He used to hang out at the library a lot," Kuhn said. "It was a pleasure for me to meet him. I was sort of in awe of him. He had a loud, booming voice, larger than life."

Kuhn is looking forward to seeing the film about Saroyan's life again. "It's excellent. It really gives you a feeling of the man," she said.

"It's a very moving film," Silvia said. "To me it's spectacular." After Silvia saw the film in San Francisco two years ago he began talking to Kalinian about showing the film in Fresno again.

Kalinian's film took eight years and \$150,000 to make. He premiered the film in Fresno in 1991, and it has been shown all over the world, including 16 times in Fresno. Kalinian said he never accepts any money for showing the film. "It was a labor of love," he said.

Kalinian said he likes talking to people and hearing their comments after they see the film. "That's my reward," he said.

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## Film: Saroyan's life chronicled

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When Kalinian came to the United States from Lebanon in 1964 he was already familiar with Saroyan's works.

"Saroyan is very well known overseas, more than in Fresno," Kalinian said. "I knew about Saroyan and I read his books and I decided if I met him sometime I would take his picture. I chased him for 12 years."

The tale of their eventual meeting and how Kalinian took his now-famous photos of Saroyan is the stuff of legends.

"It still gives me goose bumps," Kalinian said.

One day in March 1976 Kalinian was visiting his friend, the late sculptor Varaz Samuelian, in his downtown art studio when Saroyan rode up on his bicycle.

"I asked Saroyan if I could take a few pictures of him," Kalinian recalled.

"Get lost," Saroyan told him.

Kalinian persisted, only to be rebuffed again by Saroyan. But as the day wore on the two men shared stories of their Armenian heritage and Saroyan eventually allowed Kalinian to take his picture.

Saroyan was pleased with the results, said Kalinian, whose photos of Saroyan have become the best known likenesses of the famous Fresno author and playwright. One of Kalinian's photos of Saroyan was made into a commemorative U.S. postage stamp.

"He was a straightforward person. I really liked him. I learned a lot from him," Kalinian said. "I portray him as he was, the good parts and the bad parts."

Details: 488-3195.

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