Bright college years with pleasure rife,
The shortest, gladdest years of life;
How swiftly are ye gliding by!
Oh, why does time so quickly fly!
The seasons come, the seasons go,
The earth is green or white with snow,
But time and change shall naught avail
To break the friendships formed at Yale.

In after-years, should troubles rise
To cloud the blue of sunny skies,
How bright will seem through mem’ry’s haze,
Those happy, golden, by-gone days!
Oh, let us strive that ever we
May let these words our watchcry be,
Where’er upon life’s seas we sail:
“For God, for Country, and for Yale!”
“A game of chess played on your feet, requiring agility, power and intelligence.”

That’s how coach Henry Harutunian describes fencing. It’s a sport that provides strength of character for one’s entire life. For more than 30 years, Yale fencers with the will have been counting on Harutunian to hone the skill.

Harutunian has produced numerous All-Americans and an NCAA men’s foil and women’s sabre champion during his tenure. Remarkably, a number of those honored had never touched a weapon before coming to Yale. The men are 238-125 (.656) under his guidance and captured the NCAA sabre title in 1994 and the NCAA foil title in 1992. The women, meanwhile, have a 269-69 record (.796) and have won three national titles (1982, 1984, 1985).

Harutunian, the 1996-97 USFCA Coach of the Year, had a distinguished career as a fencer and coach in his native Armenia. He was named eminent coach of the Republic of Armenia in 1963, while serving on the coaching staff for the Soviet national team from 1962-1966.

One of his pupils made the U.S.S.R. Olympic team in 1956 and went on to become the first Soviet to claim the individual epee title at the Junior World Championships in 1958. Harutunian came to the United States in 1966 and coached at Brandeis for three years prior to joining the Yale staff.


Harutunian was named Coach of the Year by the National Intercollegiate Women’s Fencing Association in 1982 and by the IWFA in 1984 and 1985 at the NCAA Championships. In 1986, the U.S. Men’s Fencing Coaches Association selected him Coach of the Year.

He has also choreographed stage fencing for both theater and the screen, and has acted in films. Harutunian’s philosophy of fencing is guided by the following passage from The Works of Moliere: “The eyes which watch and warn, the brain which evaluates and decides, the hand which executes the decision must harmonize precision and speed to give real life to the sword.”