

Ralph Papakhian Memorial, 1948-2010

by Gary Wiggins

The obituary reproduced below was found in the Bloomington Herald-Times on January 15. Those of us who knew Ralph Papakhian share the sorrow that his family feels for his loss. I'm sure that there will be many glowing tributes in the Music Library Association newsletter for the contributions that Ralph made to music librarianship. However, I'd like to share with you a few personal recollections to give you an indication why I admired him so much.

The words that jump to mind when I think of Ralph are integrity, loyalty, and honesty. Ralph fervently believed in faculty governance, and he devoted much time to the American Federation of Teachers activities when the AFT was a major force on the IUB campus. One of the lasting achievements that we can all thank Ralph for is open faculty salary listings. Before the current system of open access to faculty salaries (See: <https://fdrs.fms.indiana.edu/cgi-bin/Salary/Salary.pl>), it was possible to see what salary other faculty members made, but only by paying a personal visit to the Dean of Faculties office to look at a printout. Ralph painstakingly reproduced that data for many years and made it available in computer-readable form to anyone who wanted it. While I might not have agreed with all of Ralph's ideas on how salary should be allocated, I will always be grateful for his efforts to force the administration to be more open about faculty salaries.

Another debt I owe to Ralph is for introducing me to the listserv program. He served as the listowner of the MLA-L listserv and inspired me to create CHMINF-L, the Chemical Information Sources Discussion List that has been in existence since 1991. It is significant that just one month before his death, Ralph agreed to be one of the co-owners of the IULIB-L list. In accepting my invitation, Ralph said, "you never know, we may need an underground list for purposes of agitation some time in the future. i've long thought having an open discussion list like this would be useful for IU librarians--but the deans and administrators have bullied the librarians to the point where they are frightened to say anything. sad." (If you've ever received an e-mail from Ralph, you know that he didn't believe in using capital letters!)

In the first half of 1998, I served as acting head of the Music Library, and it was during that time that I really got to know Ralph. I was always grateful for his advice while I worked there. Here are some excerpts from a memo that I sent to Dean Suzanne Thorin toward the end of my time in the Music Library:

"The choice of an Acting Head at this point in time will have a significant impact on the pool of candidates that ultimately are attracted to this position. It will send a very good message to music librarians if the next Acting Head is someone familiar to them, someone who has their respect, and someone who has the best interests of the Music Library as a guiding principle. In my opinion, that is Ralph Papakhian. . . .

He has a pretty clear view of what is right and what is wrong with the Music Library. I hope that he will be given a chance to make a significant contribution to the coming together that must occur in order for that library to be truly great. . . . Ralph would be fair to everyone concerned.

That is not to say that everyone in the Music Library would be happy with some of Ralph's decisions."

I always regretted that Dean Thorin did not take my advice.

For many reasons, Ralph Papkhian will be missed.

Gary

Arsen (Ralph) Papakhian, 61
DEC. 28, 1948 - JAN. 14, 2010

Arsen (Ralph) Papakhian died at his home in Bloomington on Thursday morning following a 16-year struggle against colorectal cancer. He was born in Detroit to parents Rev. Souren and Shoushanig Papakhian and was very proud of his Armenian heritage. He married Mary Lynn (Johnson) at St. Sarkis Armenian Apostolic Church in 1967. He was the loving and beloved father of four children and five grandchildren. He loved books and music, and earned a Master of Arts in music history and a Master of Library Science from Western Michigan University. After graduation he was employed as a music cataloger at the University of Florida, and then he came to Indiana University as a music librarian in 1973. He worked at the William and Gayle Cook Music Library until his death. He enjoyed his profession and his many colleagues at IU and in the Music Library Association. He was a gentle, kind, yet fiercely brave man who advocated for peace and social justice.

He lives on in the minds of the many relatives, friends, and colleagues who knew and loved him. Survivors include his wife, Mary; daughter Anahid Papakhian and her husband Robert Cassidy and granddaughters Nazani and Zella Cassidy; son Vahan Papakhian and his wife Rachel (Barrow) and grandsons Avedis and Aren and granddaughter Lucine Papakhian; daughter Maral Papakhian; son Zaven Papakhian and his wife Amber Shirey; brother Asbed (Victor) Papakhian and his wife Sosi (Dolkarian) and nieces Lily and Sareen Papakhian; sister Salpie (Papakhian) Hughes and niece Noreen (Hughes) and her husband Scott and their son Rhys Mollon; and brother- and sister-in-law Gary and Jeannie (Johnson) Hudkins.

He was preceded in death by his parents, his sister-in-law Lynda Kay Johnson, his parents-in-law Dr. Thomas D. and Cecelia E. Johnson, and his brother-in-law David R. Hughes.

According to his wishes, there will be no funeral, burial or memorial services. Memorial contributions may be made to the Society for Armenian Studies, WFIU, the Music Library Association, or the charity of your choice. Everyone is welcome to call or send a note to his residence to offer condolences.

<http://heraldtimesonline.com/stories/2010/01/15/obit.qp-0066611.sto>