

GEORGE NAKHNIKIAN

1920-2012

A Memory Book

George Nakhnikian was born in Bulgaria, and was of Armenian ancestry. His father and both his grandfathers were priests of the Armenian Church. The family moved to the United States in 1933, settling in the Boston area. George earned his undergraduate degree, in biochemistry, from Harvard. During the Second World War he served for two years with the United States Army in Europe. After the war he returned to Harvard, where he earned his M.A. and Ph.D. degrees, both in philosophy. His thesis, “Plato’s Theory of Empirical Knowledge,” was directed by the well-known Plato scholar Raphael Demos.

His first full-time academic appointment came in 1949 at Wayne State University. In 1956 he was appointed Chair of the Wayne State Philosophy Department. Over the course of the next decade, and almost single-handedly, he built it into a department that became well-known and highly respected by philosophers nationally. Then, after a wide-ranging search for an outside chair to revitalize the Department of Philosophy at IU, he was appointed Chair of the IU Philosophy Department in 1968. George deserves much of the credit for the department’s subsequent rise to national and international prominence. He retired from IU in 1987.

George’s scholarly work in philosophy focused on several great historical figures—among them Plato, Descartes, and Kant—and on various problems in contemporary moral theory. In 1967 he published *An Introduction to Philosophy*. He also edited or co-edited and contributed to several well-known anthologies, including *Morality and the Language of Conduct* (1963), co-edited with Hector Castaneda, then his colleague at Wayne State and subsequently, from 1969 until Castaneda’s death in 1991, a member of IU’s Department of Philosophy, and *Bertrand Russell’s Philosophy* (1974). George’s last article was published as recently as 2004.

George was also a successful teacher of philosophy. He taught a wide range of courses, but in particular, and year after year, he taught large sections of the introduction to philosophy (P100). To the many hundreds of students in those classes he offered lectures characterized by the same human(e) passion and by the same concern for precision of statement and rigor in argumentation as in his most advanced classes.

He is survived by his wife of thirty years, Robin Murphy; by their son, Alexander Murphy-Nakhnikian; by three daughters from his first marriage; and by four grandchildren. (Excerpted from the Memorial Resolution about George that Paul Eisenberg wrote and presented to the Bloomington Faculty Council in February 2013.)

EDMUND GETTIER

I first met George Nakhnikian in 1957 when he hired me to the faculty of Wayne State University. My first impression of George was in keeping with my first impression of Wayne in general. I was, after all, moving from the beauties of Cornell University to an urban university located in what appeared to be a rough part of Detroit to a department whose office was on an upper floor of what was once a hotel. George appeared to be a tough guy appropriate to a tough place, an appearance I somehow think he enjoyed. However, in a very little time I learned of the true George, someone exuding warm, even emotional, welcoming. In almost no time I felt at home, even safe. George had an overwhelming personality.

When I arrived at Wayne, I learned that George had a vision of the future of the department. He was fond of saying to his new group, a group that at that time consisted of Hector and me, that he realized that he would never be hired by a department of the status that he wished. So if he were to be in such a department he would have to create it himself. The first statement expressed a rather remarkable humility from a man with three Harvard degrees. But the second expressed anything but humility. The second reeked of an optimism, courage, and self confidence not expected in someone who would make the first. Little did I know then that George's vision transferred into action would make my next ten years professionally some of the happiest of my life.

George was endowed with the abilities and gifts that would make something similar to his vision for the department possible. One of the most important was his gift for persuasion. Think about it. George persuaded a dean in a liberal arts type faculty to invest rather heavily in a small philosophy department in a city that worshiped only things mechanical, mainly cars. This might be a time to insert a second fact. George persuaded this same dean to grant tenure to a member with only one publication. And as time went on he persuaded many other and truly outstanding people to join the department. Later, Dick Cartwright elected to leave the highly regarded Michigan department to join this inner city department with no known names. George's hand can certainly be seen here.

George had not only a vision and the skills to realize that vision, but he had also an outline of a plan. And he was fond of describing that plan, at least early in the department's history. The first plank in the plan was to hire young people rather than trying for a big well known philosopher. Wayne was Hector's second job (I think), and Bob Sleight, Alvin Plantinga, and I came directly out of graduate school. In describing the second plank of the plan he said that he intended to roll out the red carpet for them, showing enthusiastically that he believed in them and supported them. I am not exactly sure in detail what George had in mind by these statements, but what he did seemed to result in a bunch of guys getting together and having a great deal of fun doing philosophy.

Though I doubt that it was part of his original plan, I think that it contributed much to the success of his department building that he developed a strong bond with the Brown department, which department included Roderick Chisholm. In 1955-56 George had the honor of visiting Brown as an assistant professor and a Carnegie intern. During this year he met (perhaps for the first time) other members of the Brown faculty as well as graduate students such as Bob Sleight. He later hired Sleight as well as Keith Lehrer and Richard Cartwright all of whom

got their PhDs from Brown. Thus, ultimately Wayne had a strong Brown component to its faculty. Chisholm gave talks at Wayne and several times the Wayne and Brown departments took turns hosting the other in joint conferences on their campuses. As an aside it was at one of these conferences that I discovered that George had a cultivated singing voice. One fond memory--- a party at Brown, Ann Ferguson (a Brown grad student) on guitar, and George entertaining with songs in his robust, rich baritone voice.

Chisholm had a strong influence on the young faculty at Wayne, not so much for his views, though there is a trace of that, too. His influence was more in what the members of the department took to be his method. When a thesis was to be discussed it had to be stated with exact precision, preferably in writing, and if there was an argument supporting it or in which it was used, that argument would likewise have to be stated precisely, almost always in language as close to that of the predicate calculus as possible. Then a search for counterexamples would take place. If one was found, restatement was in order, and the process would start again. Looking for counterexamples became a major part of doing philosophy at Wayne. Looking for counterexamples could be fun and the search could become a competition. Thus, there were times when doing philosophy seemed like a game: obsessively accurate statements and counterexamples.

Thus, George's talents, energy and endless enthusiasm made it possible for a group of us to start our professional careers in a truly unique situation. For me personally, I spent ten absolutely wonderful years with unbelievably great colleagues under a department head that could not be matched, in what might be described as a young man's philosophical playground. And I got tenure. Thanks George.

BOB SLEIGH

George Nakhnikian was a Carnegie Intern in general education at Brown University in 1955 and 1956, the middle years of my graduate education at Brown. George was preparing to return to the Wayne Philosophy Department to become its chairman as Wayne made a transition from Wayne University to Wayne State University. This was a major transition from what was basically Detroit's city college to one of Michigan's three state universities subsequently recognized in its constitution. I don't really know what George's duties as a Carnegie Intern amounted to, but whether duty or not, he sat in on some seminars in which I was a student. I remember a seminar in ancient philosophy in which I submitted a paper on Plato's theory of perception. I'm sure it didn't amount to much, but George seemed to detect some promise under the debris. We became friends, meeting frequently in the Blue Room---Brown's on campus coffee spot at the time---to talk philosophy. I don't remember talking about much of anything else with him, but then I don't remember talking about much of anything else with anyone during those years. In particular, George never mentioned the possibility of a job at Wayne. On his return to Detroit George was in charge of funds to spend on new appointments in philosophy in 1958, the year in which I left Brown and was in need of a job. There are measures of national economic distress utilized by economists according to which the United States was in economic distress in 1958 not matched subsequently until 2009. But George had money to offer, and he made me an offer I could not refuse, primarily because it was the only offer I had. Neither my wife nor I was excited about

moving to Detroit. Actually neither of us had traveled west of Albany, New York, and neither of us felt an overpowering urge to do so—certainly not with the intention of taking up residence.

It was the best move of my life. Hector Castaneda and Ed Gettier had already joined George's department, and Al Plantinga and I arrived in 1958. Philosophically those early years at Wayne were incredibly exciting. In fact, it was something of an intellectual paradise, and much of the credit goes to George. Not only our intellectual life, but also our social life, and even our athletic life—such as it was—centered on George. He organized most of our activities outside philosophy, and he set our duties at Wayne so that we were called upon to focus on philosophy, teaching, helping select new hires to the Department, and not much else.

George nurtured each of us, and stood by us when the need arose. And need did arise on occasion. Ed and I were each much slower to finish our dissertations and start publishing than Hector and Al, a fact noted by the administration. George was successful in convincing those making relevant decisions that we were worth the wait. As mentioned, George took part in most aspects of our lives: he ran and swam with us, although neither activity had much intrinsic appeal for him, at least initially. And he made an effort to generate enthusiasm for other of our external interests. I believe that George had never seen a major league baseball game, nor given the game much thought, before he accompanied me and my sons to a game between the Detroit Tigers and the Minnesota Twins. That this whole setting was foreign to him came home to me when, during batting practice preceding the game, he leaned over and asked one of my sons in all seriousness— which two are the twins?

I learned about philosophy and about life from the colleagues mentioned—Hector, Ed, and Al, and from later additions to the faculty, especially Keith Lehrer, Mike Dunn and Dick Cartwright. It was George's devotion to the well-being of his colleagues that made it all possible.

BILL ROWE

When I was looking back on my career and writing "Friendly atheism revisited" (2010), I thought often of George. After taking one undergraduate course with him at Wayne State, I abandoned the idea of being a history major and turned to philosophy. Later, it was advice from George that sent me to the University of Michigan for a PH.D. in philosophy. Throughout my career, George was my mentor, teacher, and friend. In 1991, I dedicated Thomas Reid on Freedom and Morality (Cornell) to George, a small payment toward the great debt I owed him. Simply put, I am deeply grateful to George and will carry him in my heart.

PEGGY ROWE

Long before I met George I knew a lot about him. Bill made frequent and loving references to his "teacher and friend." In 1984, I got my own opportunity to come to know George as teacher and friend. I received a Lilly Fellowship and George agreed to supervise my readings in ethics. This was volunteer work for George. To put it mildly, he was a demanding teacher. He took our meetings very seriously, and I learned a lot that I carried over into my teaching of literature.

For Bill and myself, the gift of knowing George was enriched by getting to know Robin and Alexander to whom we send our love.

MARCIA BARON

Knowing that the memorial is coming up, I have been thinking about George. I think what stands out in my memory are three qualities: brilliance, warmth, and good cheer. It was amazing to see how he remained of good cheer (or else just presented a smiling face) in those difficult last months. (I don't know if he really was of good cheer, but he was certainly trying, and I admired him for that.) Even the last time I saw him (I believe two months before his death), when he was weak and bedridden, he greeted me warmly, assured me when I asked that he was not in any pain, and showed that appreciativeness he always showed. Also striking is his very strong sense of family, of his roots, and really of history.

You must be having a very difficult time. I hope the memorial is very meaningful and helps rather than deepens the sense of loss. It is truly a huge loss. But at least he had a good and long life, and one in which he accomplished so very much. And although he suffered great mental loss in his last years, he still remained very much part of the world, and very mentally engaged. He was always someone with whom I could have a good conversation.

TIM O'CONNOR

When I came to the dept in 1993, George was already emeritus. Even so, he took a liking to me -- mentoring young talent (or in some cases, half-talent) was something for which he was famous -- and we spent many an afternoon's hour chatting. He was a great story teller and had the voice to match. From him, I learned a lot of fascinating tidbits about philosophy and philosophers of the 1960s and 1970s. But most of our time was spent talking philosophy. We agreed on which questions were most interesting, though not on their answers. We read each other's work and engaged in spirited debate, though always with smiles. I thoroughly enjoyed these conversations, and I like to think that he did, too. As you'll no doubt hear from others who speak on Friday, he was truly a great-souled man.

SANDY SHAPSHAY

Although George had become an Emeritus professor long before I arrived at IU, I got to know him at Paul Eisenberg's house soon after I came to Bloomington, and visited with him over lunch, at departmental receptions and events, and later at Sterling House. I remember fondly, the stories he told me about the heady days of Analytic philosophy at Wayne State, and found it fascinating to hear how he re-built the IU Department, his brilliance, savvy, and love of philosophical inquiry was so apparent in these exchanges. George also always took a genuine interest in my work and experience as a young woman in philosophy, he was for me like an encouraging, philosophically-inclined Uncle.

I'd like to share a remembrance of the last time I visited with George, just a couple months before he passed away, because, for me, it captures the kind of man he was. Marcia Baron and I visited him at Sterling house, and though he was

asleep when we arrived, and had been feeling very poorly for some time, once Eric roused him, he greeted us so warmly, with big hugs and many questions about how things were going with us, in the Department, with our work, and families.

Despite his serious illness and some difficulty speaking, he displayed nothing but good cheer, inquisitiveness, self-mastery and courage. When I asked him about how Alexander was doing in his neuroscience doctoral program, his beamed with pride and told us at length about his accomplishments in the lab, the papers he was writing, and the grants he was receiving.

Alexander had written a senior thesis with me when he was an undergraduate, and so I had often discussed him with George. It was always deeply touching to me to witness the pride George took in his son, and how impressed he was with all that Alexander had achieved and continues to achieve in his academic career. George also spoke with deep appreciation for the love and care that Robin and Eric showed him, and pointed out all of the comforts they had supplied him with in his homey suite at Sterling house, from beautiful family photo albums, and Brahms symphonies on CD, to the latest book by Thomas Nagel, I never inquired where the contraband candy bars that he loved came from.

Through Socrates, Plato famously called philosophy a preparation for dying. To me, George lived in the tradition of the Ancient Greek philosophers, by doing the things in life that lead to a calmness before death: examining life, striving for excellence in one's chosen career, cultivating and appreciating what is of true value in life—especially, love, family, community, and wisdom—and, finally, by modeling how to face the end of life, that is, courageously, by spreading good will and cheer to others.

MIKE DUNN

George Nakhnikian was a bright but practical man, and realized when he earned his Ph.D. from Harvard just a few years after serving in the U.S. Army during WWII, that academic jobs were scarce, and that if he wanted to be in a first-rate philosophy department he had to build one. This he did at Wayne State University where he served as chair of the philosophy department. Among his first appointments were the excellent philosophers Hector Castaneda, Ed Gettier, Bob Sleigh, and Al Plantinga, and as the saying goes, the rest is history.

I was fortunate to join that department in my first academic appointment several years later. It was wonderful. I haven't been able to find the precise quote, but Hector wrote somewhere that it was an unending philosophical discussion, moving from coffee to offices to lunch to colloquia, often followed by dinner with outside speakers, with the only interruption being teaching classes. But even those classes were not really interruptions because they were infused with the spirit of living philosophy. George was a father not just within his own family, but also within his department. He was very supportive of his faculty in general, and especially of junior faculty. The department was egalitarian and ran on a consensus model (which didn't always work since George didn't always compromise). The department broke up a couple of years after I left - I tell myself I wasn't the reason. There were numerous individual reasons, and mine was to go to Yale, where I spent a year in a totally different (top-down) paradigm,

and could hardly wait to rejoin George (and Hector, and Nino Cocchiarella), all of whom had been recruited by IU.

The IU Philosophy Department was in trouble (if anyone wants to know more I recommend Henry Veatch's *Towards a History of the IU Philosophy Department in Bloomington - The years 1929 to 1965*, available on the departmental Website: <http://www.indiana.edu/~phil/about/Veatch.pdf>.) George was recruited to fix things, and he did, building his second first-rate philosophy department. Again his strategy was obvious in theory, but the secrets lay in his practice: hire first-rate people and support them. Almost all of the faculty already at IU left, but a few faculty who supported hiring George, e.g., Paul Eisenberg and Milton Fisk, stayed.

George officially retired from IU in 1987, but he kept coming into the department to work in a shared office for many years thereafter. He published his last paper in 2004: "It Ain't Necessarily So: An Essay Review of Intelligent Design Creationism and its Critics: Philosophical, Theological, and Scientific Perspectives," *Philosophy of Science*. George's interests were wide-ranging. It is interesting that his father, and two grandfathers were all Armenian priests. George had no fondness for orthodox religion (and I mean that in a generic sense), but he kept revisiting the moral/ethical/metaphysical issues raised thereby. George was an undergraduate chemistry major at Harvard, and continued to be interested in the physical sciences even though his primary philosophical interests were as I just described (and also in the history of philosophy). I remember visiting him just a few years ago and finding he had been reading a recent issue of *Scientific American* on quantum mechanics and was waiting to discuss it with me.

George was a remarkable individual, full of life and love. He reminded my wife Sally and me of Zorba the Greek. There were times, even at restaurants, when he would break out singing. And I remember George, and Hector, agreeing one evening at a buffet dinner for a speaker, that a world that had three kinds of beans could not be all bad. I would extend this to say that a world that had George Nakhnikian could not be all bad.

MILTON FISK

I got to know George in 1963 when he wrote me about my review of a collection he and Hector Castaneda had edited on *Morality and the Language of Conduct*. Little did I know then that several years later I would be in the thick of hiring him to come to Indiana University as chair of a Department of Philosophy, which I had only recently joined myself. I looked forward to his good humor and graciousness during our frequent phone calls for arranging matters before his arrival.

George arrived in 1968 determined to build a strong analytic philosophy department. Within a few years, he had recruited some of the best analytic philosophers. He was as vigorous physically as he was as administrator and philosopher. We spent two nights and three days out on a trail in the Smokies, and he was also a constant figure on the tennis courts at IU. There was also the lighter side of George, displayed at parties when he broke into song with his rich voice accompanied by clinking glasses all around.

In contrast, philosophical discussion with George was always an intense activity. It didn't involve merely throwing out one's hard won insights in hopes of an approving comment. George had an ideal of rationality that he associated with Plato, Descartes, and Russell. He wrote a book on Descartes and edited an excellent memorial volume on Russell. His rationalist outlook led him to divide cultures into those with roots in Greek rationalism and all the rest.

I asked George a few years back to comment on several chapters of a book I was writing. His comments on one of them were just what I needed. The other chapter touched on religion, a topic he was always happy to give his opinion on. But he handed it back with no written comments. Perhaps he liked it? I had developed in it some version of the argument that religious ethics ends up relying a secular view of what promotes society. But it turned out that for George the trouble with my chapter was that it brought up religion - for him an inherently irrational subject.

Over George's desk in the nursing home where I visited him were pictures of Tolstoy and Russell flanking pictures of two Armenian priests, his father and maternal grandfather. Robin Murphy, George's wife, told me his father lost two brothers in the Ottoman genocide of Armenians in 1915, six years before George's birth in Varna.

George was in the second wave of landings at Normandy Beach and then in the Battle of the Bulge. While not being a Tolstoyian or Russellian pacifist, Tolstoy and Russell would have praised his calling for limits to violence and to arbitrary uses of power. He trusted his rationalist principles to lead to a better world than he and those Armenian ancestors lived in.

ALEXANDER NAKHNIKIAN

I will dearly miss my philosophical debates with Dad. I have always wished he had hung on a bit longer so that I could grow up a little and realize how much he had to offer. In particular, we loved to talk about the hard problems of consciousness - when we managed to keep the conversation from turning into a shouting match, that happened in my house over philosophical disputes. I believe in free will, which to Dad was anathema. But towards the end I managed to bring him a little more into my camp. I convinced him, arguing based on the neural circuits I study, that causal closure is an extremely tricky issue when you get to systems of sufficient complexity. That thought, in turn, came to me while reading Hofstadter's work on minds and machines. Unfortunately, he started to lose his sharpness just as those conversations were starting to get good. It had taken us about five years to get to that point. As it turns out, I've found some consolation in the very ideas Dad and I discussed. Though I shared his lack of belief in an immortal soul, I often recall Hofstadter's writings about holding onto his wife after her death through the impressions she made on him. The more time one spends with a person, taking in their thoughts, feeling, and patterns of behavior, the more of them one begins to carry parts of them. More than just memories, I sometimes feel as though I knew Dad so keenly that I can still engage with much of the person he was. His love of life, or learning, and of teaching are all integral parts of me now.

ELISE NAKHNIKIAN

Throughout our life together, I often found myself trying to be a kind of interpreter-slash shock absorber between my father and the rest of the world. In his later years, I knew it was mostly his Asperger's that made it so easy for him to be misinterpreted—though deafness and pockets of memory loss played a role by then too. But when I was a kid, all I knew was that my daddy sometimes needed protecting from people who didn't understand him.

I remember being at a small party at his secretary Dorothy's apartment in Detroit when her son, Leonard, was playing Chubby Checkers' Twist and trying to get Dad to dance. I was probably five or six, but I could tell Dad did not have the slightest idea either how to dance the Twist or how to dodge Leonard's half-teasing, half-challenging request. I did the only thing I could think of to save him: I went over and sat on his lap, giving him an excuse to stay put.

So it feels very good, today, to be in a room full of people who "got" my dad too. I know you don't need to be told what it was that made him special and worthy of love, and I'm very glad to be able to swap stories with you.

I feel his presence here because Dad lives on all of us who loved or were influenced by him.

There are the colleagues he loved so much and had such rich, life-long dialogues with, many of whom are here today or have sent their thoughts to be shared with us.

There are the students he taught over the decades. If Dad worshipped any god at all, it was Harvard, but over the years at Wayne State and IU he gained a genuine

appreciation of state-funded universities too. He saw how many bright young people wound up in his classes, eager and willing to learn, some with fine minds that had, he felt, never been properly challenged. I'm sure that for some of those kids, hearing my quirky, charismatic father talk so passionately about truth and beauty and, as one of his book titles put it, morality and the language of conduct was like having a door opened inside their skulls, revealing a room full of things they had never known existed.

Then there are the friends he made outside academia. Many of you are here today too. Many more could not be here, either because they're too far away or too frail or because they preceded Dad in death. That's the downside of living to 91: You lose an awful lot of dear friends and family along the way.

And, of course, there's his family—those of us who could be here today and those of us who could not.

I see Dad most of all in his children. We all feel Armenian to some degree, though not nearly as much as dad did, of course, since we're American half-breeds and he was Armenian to his core. That must have been strange for him; he once told me it felt wrong not to be able to speak to his children in the language of his own childhood. But we all speak his language in other ways.

We are not namby-pamby people, my siblings and I. We are, as dad liked to say, full of piss and vinegar, quick to speak up when we see an injustice—and once we start talking, good luck to anyone who tries to get a word in edgewise! We respect other people's opinions as much as we do our own gut instincts, but we also have a deep respect for facts, and for the difference between facts and conjecture.

All that is pure dad.

I also feel dad in me in little, daily things, like the love he and I shared for tennis, movies, and (unfortunately) food. Or the way he taught me to hold a cat's head in my hands and massage it so hard you would think the skull was about to crack. I have yet to meet a cat that doesn't love that, and every time I do it, I think of Dad.

The rants Dad went on and the righteous rages he could fly into made him appear arrogant, even contemptuous to some people (that was the Asperger's too, I now know). So one of the things I sometimes wished I could make people understand was how humble he actually was.

Dad was keenly aware that hard work alone would never have gotten him as far as it did if he hadn't also had his share of good luck—more than his share, he might have said—and some powerful mentors along the way. The first was his grandfather, who ignored his own breaking heart to send his daughter and her children to this country so the apple of his eye, my father, could fulfill the potential his grandfather saw in him. Then there was his high school teacher Elizabeth Gould, who guided him into Harvard and an intellectual world that might as well have been the moon as far as his parents were concerned, but that was, as Miss Gould knew, exactly where dad belonged. There was the Army officer in World War II who saved his life by pulling him out of the infantry position where he would surely have died (during one period of particularly heavy Allied losses in Europe, the casualty rate in his company was 300%) by making

dad his driver and interpreter, though he didn't even know how to drive at the time. And the deans and Chancellor Wells at Wayne State and IU, who gave him the trust and freedom to build up the philosophy departments that were his pride and joy, and the central focus of so much of his life.

Dad was truly grateful, as most of us aspire to be but few of us manage in so consistent and heartfelt a way, for the gift of life. It made you feel more alive just to watch as he kvelled over a tasty dinner or a favorite piece of music, or roared at a joke. He threw himself into everything he did with the same gusto: exercising. Reading. Writing. Being with friends and family.

Right to the end, he appreciated every day he got, never once complaining about his pain or galloping disabilities, even as he got so stooped over he couldn't look you in the eye if you were walking by his side.

When I was little, I called him my oven daddy. That goes back to sitting in his lap too: I did that a lot, and he always threw off waves of body heat. But now I think of him more as a human campfire than an oven. Strangers were constantly drawn to his glow, and friends loved to warm their hands over it.

He could burn too, and the closer you were, the more you risked getting hit by a scarring shower of sparks. But most of the time, my father threw off a steady and nurturing heat. And the light that he shed was a beacon of unfiltered zest for life and rigorous secular humanist thinking in a world that feels darker without him.

I'm proud to be his daughter.

ELLEN NAKHNIKIAN

How to capture the essence of my father in five minutes? Lana Eisenberg described him as a force of nature. Along with tornadoes, hurricanes, earthquakes and volcanoes we can now add...George.

He had enormous energy, charisma and passion throughout his life, well into old age. His physical presence was commanding - when he walked into a room, you noticed. He threw himself into everything he did with complete conviction...philosophy, exercise, music, eating, and reading the Russians were some of his primary passions. And, of course, "his" philosophy departments and the people in them.

My father had opinions about nearly everything, and if he had an opinion then ipso facto it was the truth. For example, you may think that what food you like is a matter of personal preference. However, you would be wrong, in the world according to George. If my father liked a certain food (like sheep brains) it was by definition a wonderful, excellent food and you should like it too!

To be around George you had to be thick skinned. He told the truth as he saw it; he wasn't as concerned about what others might think or feel. I remember one day when I was 13 (a very awkward, self-conscious 13) and we were at the house of our friends the Shwayders. I had a major crush on the Shwayder boys. We were making wine and I was turning the grape press. My father decided to

announce to everybody standing there, including the Shwayder boys, “Hey! Look at her! She’s strong like bull!” “You know why she’s so strong?” he bellowed. Of course, everyone was all ears, since he was yelling so loudly no one could pay attention to anything else. “She eats kidneys!” Kidneys, I thought in horror. Now the Shwayder boys were thinking of me as strong like a bull AND eating kidneys. What could be worse? But Dad hadn’t yet delivered the final blow to the Shwayder boys ever remotely considering me as dating material. “Kidneys! They put hair on your chest!” REALLY, Dad?

It is only from the vantage point of many years that I am able to say that having to deal with this aspect of my father gave me a certain inner strength. Being dad’s daughter, especially growing up in the 50’s, outed me as a cultural oddity whether I liked it or not. I was forbidden to go to church because churches were delusional and forbidden to join the Girl Scouts because it was a fascist organization. This provided me with a certain skepticism about mainstream American values that serves me well to this day.

My father was passionate about his belief in logic and rationality. After all, he was a philosopher. As many of you know, he spent much of his life arguing against the existence of God. PASSIONATELY arguing against God’s existence. If it makes sense to say that someone has a religious passion about atheism, he did. Al Plantinga, a member of my father’s beloved Wayne State department, tells the story of how my father just could not believe that Al was a Christian. My father had a very high opinion of the intelligence and philosophical caliber of his “boys,” as he called them, in the Wayne State department. When my father would hold forth about how people who believed in God were idiots, Bob Sleigh (also a member of the Wayne State department) would say, “But George, what about Al? Don’t you think he’s smart?” My father, at a loss to explain this phenomenon, would proclaim, “He must have a screw loose somewhere!” I don’t think that my father ever realized the degree to which, in his own life, emotion often trumped logic.

But this is what I loved most about my father...his big heart, and how passionate he was. He wanted to share what he loved with those he loved, whether that meant feeding you his flavorful black bean soup, taking Lizzie and Judy and me to the park every day in the summer to play tennis or arguing about God’s existence. While he often could not understand why others did not view the world as he did, he did not take himself too seriously. He could laugh at himself, and often did, when his idiosyncrasies were pointed out to him. His laugh was something I remember well. When my sisters and I were little and our parents invited their friends Milton and Warren to a dinner party, we knew we would not get to sleep for a very long time. Our father and Milton and Warren laughed so uproariously that we, upstairs in our bedrooms on another floor of the house, could never get to sleep until they went home.

You all in the IU philosophy department, as well as his “boys” in the Wayne State department, were like family to him. He was the secular version of his grandfather, who had been the patriarch of the Armenian Church in Bulgaria. In his role as patriarch of these two departments, my father felt it was his responsibility to provide a nurturing environment for talented young philosophers to flourish, and to inspire undergraduates to love philosophy. These philosophy departments were vitally important communities for my father, since as an avowed atheist he eschewed religious communities.

In his later years my father's driven intensity fell away and he was more able to deeply appreciate his life. When I would visit him I always got a huge welcoming smile and an enthusiastic, "Ellen!" when I walked through the door. He made me feel as if I were the one person in the whole world he most wanted to see. And for all that he admired intelligence and education, he also valued kindness. He spoke to me often about how kind his caregivers were at Sterling House, where he lived for the last years of his life. He knew them by name and felt a great deal of affection for them, as they did for him. I worried, at that stage of his life, when he could barely hear, when he could no longer exercise, taste food, or see well enough to read, that he might become bitter and depressed. Instead, he became ever more grateful for and content with his life, even as it...and he...appeared to shrink. He felt to me like an Armenian incarnation of Yoda from Star Wars and the Buddha. (Though I know he would hate my saying the Buddha part...way too religious!) But I am referring to his sense of inner peace that was not affected by outward circumstances.

Gary, thank you and the department for sponsoring this memorial service and for continuing to so generously provide my father with a place even after he retired, and thank you loyal friends from the bottom of my heart, for coming here to recognize this "mad Armenian" as he called himself, this imperfect and magnificent human being who so deeply touched us all.

PAUL EISENBERG

George was my closest friend, a surrogate father (he was, after all, nineteen years older than I), and a true colleague. Perhaps I should describe him also as "avuncular" since, no more than a couple of years after we became colleagues, he called me into his office to express his concern about my apparent loneliness. I was then a bachelor in my mid-twenties; my father, already retired, and my mother lived with me; and indeed I did not have much of a social life. I took his kindly concern to heart, and it was a mere (!) eight years later that I married Lana Ruegamer, who has been my dear spouse for the last thirty-five years.

In my second year here, I was on the search committee which was instructed by the then dean of COAS to make a recommendation about the appointment of an outside chair. The committee's unanimous recommendation after his visit here was that George be appointed. Thus I got to know him even before he began his career at IU, and I was with him and Robin in his room at Sterling House when he died there on July 30.

George was a man who knew what he liked, and also what he did not like. He loved classical music, especially the works of Bach, Mozart, and Beethoven (naturally!); in literature he was especially fond of the great Russian classics. George loved doing philosophy, and he had a great "nose" for philosophical talent. Both at Wayne State and, more briefly, here at IU he sought out to be his colleagues the most able philosophers he could find.

George was someone whom I might describe as a "happy atheist": there were no regrets or qualms accompanying his atheism (although he was the son and the grandson of Armenian priests). I know that several years ago he encountered a certain believer in the men's room at the Y, and the two of them—each stark naked—traded views about the existence or, in George's case, the non-existence of God.

It occurs to me that, quite generally, George was a man without beliefs. I mean, in this case, that I cannot recall, from all the years I knew him, that the phrase “I believe” ever passed his lips. George was often fierce in the expression of what he “knew”; but, whether fierce or kindly, he was always authentic. He leaves behind a real and lasting gap in the lives of those of us who knew him well.

Like others here this afternoon, I’ve left a couple of photos of George on top of the piano—photos which, ordinarily, I keep in my office. One is a framed photo of George and me with two of our distinguished graduates, Greg Landini and Francesco Orilia. The other is a laminated page from the IDS of March 10, 2006; the photo shows George eagerly approaching Dan Dennett (with me a bit behind George), who had just finished a lecture here on “religion as a natural phenomenon”!

ROBIN MURPHY

I would just like to share a few memories I have of George. For many years we would debate some of the differences between George as a philosopher and me as a historian. I remember one day when I teaching **Waiting for Godot** for the Honors College and he in philosophy department. When I met him, he had a beard and he was going back and forth about whether he would shave it off. I said that he was similar to Godot. I left to teach my class and, when I returned, his beard was gone. He seemed happy, but I was upset that he had done it because I felt, a little bit, as if it were my fault and he seemed very different from the George I had left.

George also didn’t believe that he had to read a thinker in order to understand them. He thought Marx had no value, even though he had never read him. This, for a historian, was untenable. When our son was a freshman at Indiana University, he and his father argued for weeks about the paradox of the heap. I soon began to grow very tired of discussions of the heap, but they enjoyed their discussions, even though George was beginning to slide into Alzheimer’s.

Towards the end of his life, George, as anyone who knew him realized, was absorbed in proving a rational reason to demonstrate that faith was incompatible with science and rational thought. The existence of God, therefore, could not be reasonable. He often, in all innocence, would ask people who drifted into his world, no matter who they were, if they believed in God. He did this without malice, he simply wanted to understand how they could believe, when he considered faith completely irrational. One time at the IU Medical Center, a woman was taking blood from him and, as she put the needle in, he asked, if she believed Jesus Christ was her savior. She happily said, “yes”. George, simply curious, asked her “why.”

One night, when a number of faculty members were at our home, Hector Castaneda, was talking about cloning, which was relatively new, and wondered if one could make a number of little Hectors. We keep him going and it became clear that Hector was really warming up to the idea of clones of himself. We all found it somewhat typical of Hector and were having of bit of humor with him. We told him that it might be possible and he seemed enchanted with the idea.

When Hector died George and I were at his memorial with Herman Wells. George spoke of how Hector had been a self-made man. Herman turned to me and said that the same thing could be said about George. He was born in Varna, Bulgaria and came to Boston, when he was thirteen. Although he often disagreed

with America and her policies, he was always grateful for what he learned here and the life he had. He realized that he would never have had the opportunities he had in this country and the education for which he was most grateful. Although he would argue his own points, he was always open to hire people brighter than he was. He had an uncanny ability to pick people who would become excellent philosophers and was happy when they were succeeded. He helped establish two departments of philosophy, one at Wayne State and one here at Indiana University.

George would always say that he lived a charmed life. He was in World War II, but he never really fought, rather he would go ahead and find lodgings for officers. He never fired his rifle or was in combat until the Battle of the Bulge. A general came up to him and told him to take his rifle and go up a hill. He came back quickly and said that Germans with sub-machine guns were shooting at him. The general told him to take his rifle and join the battle. George had no idea what to do, but the colonel, with whom he had been in Wales and throughout the war, put him in the back of a jeep and took him out of battle that George's inexperience might have meant death for him. George had loads of war stories. He loved to cook and eat, and he often would roam around the countryside to get eggs or chickens and feed his fellow soldiers. He always enjoyed cooking for people and always showed his Armenian skills as a host.

Lastly, in many ways, George was bigger than life. When he laughed, it was impossible not to laugh with him. I invite all of you to go home and think of one of your most favorite memory of George. I want to thank Paul Eisenberg who was wonderfully loyal friend and was there with me when George died, he on one side, I on the other. I also want to thank all of you for coming today.