

## **Professor Tara Prasad Das (1/10/1933-7/18/2017)**

(communication from the bereaved family: obtained by Dr. Shanti Mishra)

Tara Prasad Das' death on July 18, 2017 brings a feeling of loss and grief to a worldwide community of family, friends, students and colleagues. Although best known for his distinguished and prolific 60 year career in theoretical physics, Prof. Das' greatest accomplishments were as a devoted and fiercely loyal son, brother, father, grandfather, uncle, cousin and friend. His greatest joy was attending the many academic, sporting and social events of his four grandchildren; he truly delighted in their accomplishments. He was truly a wonderful person and his loss is keenly felt by many.



Tara Das was born on July 7, 1932 in Cuttack, Orissa, India to Radha Krishna and Krishna Priya Das, one of seven siblings. He was a brilliant student, entering college at age 13 and receiving his PhD from the Saha Institute of Nuclear Physics in 1955. Dr. Das then embarked on a long and fruitful career that began as a postdoctoral research associate at Cornell University in Ithaca, NY. This first trip to the US from India consisted of 5 flights and a passage on the Queen Mary before arriving in New York. Dr. Das' subsequent work took him all over the world including positions at UC Berkeley, Columbia University, the Atomic Research Center in Bombay, UC Riverside, University of Utah and the State University of New York in Albany. Through his numerous research collaborations, he interacted with physicists on 6 continents. During his fertile academic career, Prof. Das published more than 400 journal articles, 3

books and numerous book chapters. He presented his research at hundreds of national and international meetings. During his illustrious career, he graduated 53 Ph.D students who became a huge and extended family to him. Through his work, he significantly shaped the fund of knowledge in the areas of biophysics and hyperfine interactions. He also made noteworthy contributions to the theoretical understanding of magnetic resonance and spin echo. Professional honors include US Senior Scientist Award, Alexander von Humboldt Foundation, Germany (twice); Yamada Science Foundation Award, Japan; Presidential Excellence in Research Award (SUNY at Albany); Jawaharlal Nehru Visiting Professorship, Central University of Hyderabad, India; Eminent Scientist Award at Institute of Physical and Chemical Research (RIKEN) Japan; Monbusho (Ministry of Science, Education, Culture and Sports, Japan) Visiting Foreign Scientist Award. In addition to his work, he was a devotee of politics, literature and sports with a dizzying degree of knowledge about innumerable topics. To the end of his life, he was able to quote the poetry of Tennyson.

Tara married Basanta Manjari Mahanti in Bhubaneswar, India in 1958 and soon after moved to Illinois facing the daunting challenge of establishing a new life far from their families. The Das family ultimately settled in Guilderland, NY in 1971 where Prof Das began a career in the physics department at SUNY Albany that culminated in his retirement in 2013 at the age of 81. Their 3 children represent different stages of Prof Das' academic career – Puspa Manjari Das PhD born in Champaign, Illinois, Shankar Prasad Das MD in Oxford, England and Surjya Prasad Das MD in Riverside, California. Through his life, Prof Das travelled extensively, visiting more than 40 countries and frequently included his family, fostering an enduring appreciation for the closeness of family and the unity of humanity. He treated everyone he met with dignity and respect, providing an enduring example for all around him.

Although the last year of his life was plagued by health problems, Professor and Mrs. Das were able to make a trip on the Queen Mary in 2016, commemorating the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of their previous voyage after the birth of Shankar. Additionally, Prof. Das was able to make a final trip to India in February and March 2017 which was highlighted by being able to visit his 4 remaining siblings and hosting 2 of his grandsons and 21 of their fraternity brothers on a spring break trip to Mumbai and Goa. Professor Das was able to attend the graduation of his granddaughter, Nicole, from Syracuse University on 5/13/17 but unfortunately was unable to attend the subsequent graduation of his grandson, Rajendra, from the University of Virginia. The Das family would particularly like to thank for their skilled and compassionate care Drs. Parag Shah, Elizabeth Marks, George Forrest and the entire rehab staff at Albany Medical Center. In addition, the entire Guilderland community has been a source of support through the years.

Professor Das' impact on the people around him is best summarized by the daughter of one of his PhD students:

“My mother came to the US in 1972 to pursue her PhD in physics with Prof Tara Prasad Das at SUNY Albany...He was a pioneer of our Oriya community, sponsoring countless students and launching their American dreams. For me, born far from extended family, he was my Aja (grandfather,) passing on the books his children had outgrown and sparking my love of words. He was delightful and delighted every time I ever saw him; I am because he was.”

Professor Das' memory will live on in his family and the thousands of lives he touched. He is survived by his beloved wife of 59 years, Basanta, his daughter, Puspa, and his sons Shankar (Sheila) and Surjya; his beloved grandchildren are Rajendra Prasad, Nicole Manjari, Sanjay Prasad and Brandon Charles Das. His three sisters Prabhat Nalini, Durgesh Nandini and Mandakini as well as his brother GEN (ret'd) Bijoy Prasad Das reside in India.

Say not in grief: "He is no more, but live in the thankfulness that he was." (proverb)

Rest in a boundless sea of gratitude.

NOTE: In lieu of flowers, contributions are invited to the University of Albany Foundation, Professor TP Das Physics Endowment