

PHILIP E. AURON PH.D.



Philip E. Auron, Ph.D., age 72, passed away Sunday, October 13, 2024, after a five-month battle with esophageal cancer. Born in Wilkes-Barre, PA, in 1952, he spent many years in the Boston area. Although Phil lived in Pittsburgh for the last twenty-two years, he always considered himself a Bostonian. At the time of his passing, he was surrounded by family and friends.

Phil had a deep love of science from his early years, and bought his first microscope when he was 12. He turned that love into a lifelong quest, vocation, and avocation. Educated at Wilkes University, he received his Ph.D. in Biochemistry from The Pennsylvania State University. He was a Damon Runyon postdoctoral fellow at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology (MIT), Assistant Professor at Tufts University, Associate Professor at Harvard Medical School, Professor at the University of Pittsburgh, and Professor and former chair of the Department of Biological Sciences at Duquesne University.

He was a founder and former Board member of two molecular analysis companies, Genetic Technology Corporation and Betagen Corporation, as well as a consultant to numerous corporations. Phil was noted for sequencing Interleukin 1, the cornerstone of several of his patents, including one which led to the development of the FDA approved drug Ilaris (canakinumab), used in the treatment of arthritis and other diseases. Phil frequently collaborated and published with his wife, Dr. Deborah Galson. Phil was also involved in a landmark legal case that secured the confidentiality of the academic peer review process. But, Phil was most proud of the many students and postdoctoral fellows that he taught, advised, mentored, and guided through their research in his years as an educator, his legacy is enriched by their work.

Phil's love of science was bolstered by his endless curiosity. When conversing with friends, if he was missing some information, he would immediately pull out his phone to investigate and firm up his knowledge base. This applied to all matters of culture, art, archeology, social history, and photography. Phil was a dedicated photographer, ever present at family gatherings, and he leaves behind thousands of unedited photos. Alongside his love of art, Phil was an entertainer. He possessed a marvelous singing voice and perfect pitch. He could remember any tune he ever heard, from arias to advertisement jingles. He had incredible memory recall, and was always ready to recite one of Lincoln's speeches or a monologue from Shakespeare. He also greatly enjoyed riding his bicycle, even into his later years. He had a great sense of humor which sustained those around him and was still in evidence even in his last few days.

Phil was the son of the late Ben and Frances Auron of Swoyersville, PA, and is survived by his wife, Deborah Galson; his children, Zack and wife Kristen (New York), Alex and Rebecca (both of Pittsburgh); his brother, Marshal and wife Kathy (Charlotte); as well as several nieces, nephews, cousins, and in-laws, and their descendants, as well as several others that also regarded him as their "Papa." He was a committed cat lover (and secret dog lover), dedicating his love and attention to several animal family members over the years. He will be missed by his two loving cats, Cori and Minty.

Phil was a member of Temple Ohav Shalom and Beth Hamedrash Hagodol-Beth Jacob Synagogue. The funeral service will be held at Temple Ohav Shalom, on Tuesday, October 15, 2024, at 11 AM. Visitation one hour prior to service (10 AM-11 AM). Interment at Beth Shalom Cemetery. Shiva will be observed at the Auron residence, where family and friends will be received.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to Hillman Cancer Center, UPMC Cancer Pavilion, Suite 1B, 5150 Centre Avenue, Pittsburgh, PA 15232, or the Wilkes University General Scholarship Fund (<https://www.wilkes.edu/give>). Arrangements entrusted to **RALPH SCHUGAR CHAPEL, INC.**

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