

Marcus “Marc” G. Karel, PhD



Marcus “Marc” G. Karel, PhD, formerly of Newton, MA, died on July 25, 2019 at a hospice house in Lincoln, MA. He was 91 years old. Holocaust survivor, immigrant, beloved son, brother, husband, father and uncle; inspiring professor, brilliant researcher, respected author, colleague, mentor, friend- Marc Karel was all of these.

Marc was the elder of two children born to David and Cila (Lipschutz) Karel in Lvov, Poland (now Lviv, Ukraine) in 1928. David Karel, along with his brothers, created and successfully ran a small chain of women’s clothing stores in Lvov.

War arrived in Poland in 1939: the family business was lost, relatives scattered – most were murdered. During the worst period, Marc, his younger sister Rena and their parents together spent the last 22 months of the war in hiding. To say they were often hungry would be an understatement; that they survived is miraculous.

After the war, Marc and his family moved westward, eventually immigrating to the United States, where they settled in Newton, just outside of Boston. Marc completed his bachelor’s degree (1955) at Boston University and doctorate (1960) at Massachusetts Institute of Technology.

In 1956 Marc met the love of his life, Carolyn Frances Weeks, a graduate of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, and two years later they married. Together, Marc and Cal raised four children and welcomed four grandchildren into their family. In 2008, on the eve of their ‘golden’ wedding anniversary, these were some of the words Marc wrote to his wife: “.... *no money in the world can buy what we have given each other for fifty years...* ”

In America, Marc achieved his childhood dream of becoming an engineer. Marc began his long career at MIT as a laboratory assistant and graduate student in 1951 and rose quickly to become a tenured Professor of Chemical and Food Engineering in the Department of Chemical Engineering. Eventually he became a Professor Emeritus there.

After MIT closed its Food Science department in 1988, Marc was invited to join the Chemical Engineering department as State of New Jersey Professor of Food Science at Rutgers University in 1989; he transitioned to Emeritus status there also, in 1996.

Marc is known and respected worldwide for his work in food engineering, food processing, and the physical chemistry of foods. His long and celebrated career took him to lecture, collaborate or consult on four continents.

Here, perhaps, is the secret of his success: among Marc's most important skills were the ability to build teams, manage people (gently), nurture talent, and create a family environment. This is why Marc was so beloved by his colleagues and students.

Marc received many awards and honorary doctorates, but the one he was most proud of was given to him early in his career in 1970: the First William V. Cruess Award for Excellence in Teaching, from the Institute of Food Technologists.

Marc's exceptional abilities as a teacher and mentor are clearly reflected in the achievements of his former graduate students – many of them went on to great success in academia and industry around the world.

When he wasn't teaching, writing, researching, consulting (NASA, Pillsbury, M&M Mars, Du Pont, and many others) or spending time with his family, Marc enjoyed reading fiction and non-fiction, traveling near and far, swimming, cross-country skiing, and hiking (he was a proud member of the Appalachian Mountain Club's Four Thousand Footer Club). In his younger days, he was also known to enjoy an occasional glass of scotch.

Highly educated, multi-lingual (Polish, Russian, German, Hebrew, and English), world traveler, a lover of the arts (museums, theatre, music, films), generous and kind-hearted; Marc Karel was many things, but he was never pretentious or boring!

Marc is survived by his wife of almost 61 years, Carolyn Frances (Weeks) Karel; son Steven Karel (Lizbeth Hedstrom) of Auburndale, daughters Karen Karel of Waltham and Debra Karel Nardone (Mark Nardone) of Holliston; four grandchildren: Amanda Nardone, Kristen Nardone, Emma Griffith and Bennet Karel; sister Rena Carmel, niece Julia Carmel, and great-nephew David Carmel, all of Newton Highlands; Leslie Griffith of Weston (mother of Emma and Ben); nephew James Weeks, Jr. and family, and niece Sharon Weeks Mancini and family, all of Utah. Marc was predeceased by his parents, by his brother-in-law James Weeks and sister-in-law Jean Weeks, and by his eldest daughter Linda L. Karel, MD.

Funeral arrangements were private. A celebration of Marc's life will take place later this year. Memorial contributions may be made to the American Red Cross.

