

Passings February – April 2024 (scroll down for obituaries)



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Philip Avery Johnson died on February 28, 2024 in Red Bank, NJ



Ronald Charles Alessio Allison passed away at home on February 18, 2024, with loved ones by his side. Ronald received scholarships and grants to attend Yale University and graduated in 1963. He graduated from Columbia University College of Physicians and Surgeons in 1967. After an internship at Stanford, he completed his residency at UC Davis, University of Vermont, and Vanderbilt with a specialty in Urology. From 1972 to 1974, Ronald served our country at Keesler Air Force Base in Biloxi, MS. He practiced Urology in Stockton, CA from 1974 to 2017. Wanting a legal education, Ronald graduated from Humphreys University in 1996 and passed the bar in 1997. Ronald was active in law until his illness in 2024. One of Ronald's favorite sayings was that "health is a function of participation." Ron served as Cubmaster for his sons' Cub Scout pack. He was a member of Rotary, Toastmasters, Barbershop, Italian American Club, Pacific Italian Alliance, Odd Fellows, Freemasons, Shriners, Sundance Running Club, and many others. As a lifelong runner, he completed numerous marathons, with his greatest achievement being the Western States 100. The trail connects Squaw Valley and Auburn. Ronald ran the trail in less than 24 hours, which earned the coveted silver buckle. Ronald was a committed traveler and visited all but one continent. He especially enjoyed traveling with Yale classmates and performing with the Yale Alumni Chorus in South America, Russia, Europe, Georgia, Armenia, Turkey, Cuba, and South America. When Halley's Comet returned, Ronald led a tour to New Zealand. His final travel came in 2023 when he attended his 60th Yale Reunion. Ronald is survived by Cynthia, his wife of 55 years, his sons William and John Alessio, and five grandchildren.

Jon Larson recalls: "As with so many of our classmates, my personal connection with Ron was made later in life after Yale. Ron and Cynthia participated enthusiastically in all of our Yale '63 activities over the years, here in the Bay Area, in New Haven, and Yale-related travels abroad. Ron and Cynthia lived in Stockton in the central Sacramento Valley on a 20-acre spread of cherry and walnut trees which he was only too pleased to let his neighbors farm and harvest for him while he focused on his Urology practice and participating in many community activities. During our Yale '63 tours of France and the British Isles, I was always impressed by how Ron arrived each morning well studied ahead of time for the planned visits for each day."



Virgil Dixon Bogert died on December 6, 2023 at Edward Hospital in Naperville, IL. Dixon earned a B.S. (Class of 1963), M.S. (1965), and Ph.D. (1969) from Yale University, all in physics. He also taught astronomy at Yale. In 1970 Dixon accepted a position at the National Accelerator Laboratory, Fermilab, in Batavia, IL. He played key roles in the design, development, and construction of many of the Lab's accelerator projects, including the Main Injector and NuMI, as well as related neutrino experiments. His expertise was widely sought after in the experimental physics community; he served and consulted on multiple NSF and DOE review panels and subcommittees to aid in the development of scientific research projects across the US. He was even referred to as Fermilab's "Indiana Jones" upon his retirement from the Lab's Accelerator Physics Center in 2008. After his retirement Dixon continued his affiliation with Fermilab as a guest scientist. He also continued his love of and support for Yale University throughout his entire life, sponsoring both undergraduate and graduate scholarships in physics, and attending as many Class of 1963 and graduate reunions as he could. Dixon had a fondness for sacred and secular music. He loved railroad trains of every description and had a collection of Lionel and LGB trains, as well as smaller model trains. His hobbies included travel, gardening, numismatics, philately, and attending theatrical productions and musical concerts. Dixon was an active member of the Congregational United Church of Christ of St. Charles, IL. Dixon is survived by his sister Elva Crawford, his nephew Evan Bogert Crawford, and his close friend Jean Atkins of Naperville, IL.

Phil Scott writes: "I did not know Dixon while we were undergraduates. I did sit next to him at the Class Dinner at the 50th Reunion. I found him to be a gentle, quiet person who loved physics and loved Yale. His eyes misted over at Bright College Years. Susan remarked as to how devoted he seemed."



Donald Avery Graham (Sharif Munawwir) died on February 18, 2024. He studied at Yale University (B.A., Magna Cum Laude, 1963 and M. Phil. 1973) and the University of California at Berkeley (M.A. 1965). Sharif became a professor of Literature and Comparative Religion, first at the University of Arizona and then at Pima College. Sharif began studying Sufism after he first encountered Pir Vilayat Inayat Khan in Paradise, AZ in 1970. In 1982 Sharif visited the Nekbakht Foundation Archives in Suresnes, France, and from that time began working every summer on The Complete Works of Pir-o-Murshid Hazrat Inayat Khan. Sharif became the editor-in-chief of the compendium in 1990. In 1998 Sharif retired early from academia and moved to Suresnes with his wife Kore Salvato and his daughter Elodie to take up work in the Archives full time. Over the course of 14 years 11 volumes of the Complete Works were finished. In 2012 Sharif left Suresnes and returned to the U.S. In 2016 he was in a terrible automobile accident in which his spine and other bones were broken, but he eventually recovered from those injuries. Of late his Sufi work had been mostly on the inner planes, following in the footsteps of Pir-o-Murshid. Sharif is survived by his three daughters, Ramona, Jalelah, and Elodie, and three grandchildren.

Leonard Chazen writes: “Although I stayed in touch with Sharif (who will always be Donald to me) until our 60th Reunion last spring, my most vivid memories of him go back to our Senior Year when Donald and I were part of the Elihu 1963 Delegation. The people in the Class of 1962 who had put our delegation together, told me that he was a luminary of the undergraduate English program, which was true, but only captured a small part of his personality. The essential Donald was always seeking out new experiences, especially those with a mystical component. In 1963 it took the form of speaking in tongues, which Donald explained to us was how the Apostles spoke when they were possessed by the Holy Spirit. While he pursued an academic career, Donald’s interest in mysticism eventually led him into Sufism, the Muslim version of religious mysticism. Donald (now Sharif) not only practiced Sufism, he also became a leading Sufi scholar, which eventually led him to take up residence at a Sufi center in the Paris suburbs. But if ever there was a religious leader who was also irreverent (in the best sense of the word) it was Sharif, and I could always count on some entertaining conversation if Sharif happened to look me up on one of his visits to New York.” Wally Grant adds: “I first met Sharif as ‘Don Graham’ while I was serving as a deacon of Battell Chapel and then again when we were part of the 1963 Elihu delegation. We kept in touch off and on for years, more so in recent years when he was Sharif. A wonderful, thoughtful, and interesting man. He lived his beliefs and I enjoyed learning about them from him.”



Philip Avery Johnson died on February 28, 2024 in Red Bank, NJ. After graduating from Yale in 1963, Phil earned his M.S. in Mathematics from Ohio State University in 1965 and his Ph.D. in Computer Science from Rutgers University (the first Ph.D. Rutgers awarded in that field) in 1974. Phil worked for 32 years at Bell Telephone Laboratories, where he was involved in domestic and international maintenance and operational standards for telecommunications. Phil served on both domestic and international bodies concerned with telecommunications standards, including T1M1, of which was Chair from 1992 to 1996. After retiring from Bell Labs, Phil worked on local telecommunications switching protocols at Bell Communications Research, followed by stints teaching both undergraduate and graduate courses at the College of William and Mary and Hampton University, during which Phil wrote texts on operating systems and internet protocols. Phil is survived by his wife, Margaret McMillen, whom he married in 1985; his children Lori Avery Faust and Jeffrey L. Johnson; and four grandchildren.

Steve Bruner writes: “Phil was a Midwestern boy, honest, modest, but moving in arcane East Coast technological circles. Despite the conflicts implied in these assignments, he was largely unflappable.” **Guy Struve** remembers: “Freshman Year Phil and I were in adjoining rooms in Welch Hall. We hit it off immediately, and roomed together in TD, along with Steve Bruner, until the lure of single rooms separated us in Senior Year. Phil was a wonderful person – a gentle giant, quiet, unassuming, and modest to a fault about his many accomplishments. I never knew him to raise his voice in anger. In his last years a mysterious illness left Phil wheelchair-bound and unable to speak. He bore this affliction with characteristic grace, under the devoted care of his wife Margaret. To the end of his life, Phil continued to find enjoyment in Yale football games and our Class Notes.”