

“My little children let us love, not in word or speech; but in truth and action.” 1 John 3:18 (NRSV)

JOHN NAKASHIAN, age 87, a gentle giant, passed into his eternal rest on February 26, 2009. Born in Paterson, he moved to Fair Lawn at the age of six where he



resided the remainder of his life and contributed to the borough through many civic organizations. He endeared himself to everyone he encountered, both in the community and his home parish, in a quiet and unassuming way.

He was a much-loved figure in his Church family and the Fair Lawn community. Councilwoman Jeanne Baratta, said of John, “Not only did he help everyone he could; he often did it without expecting or wanting recognition. He did so many things that people didn’t know he did because he did it anonymously. He was just a true gentleman and will be greatly missed in Fair Lawn. He was a wonderful humanitarian.” Others who knew John through the years attested to how he showed people what it meant to be a volunteer. He provided an example of commitment and he was definitely ‘other-centered’ in an exemplary life.

In his youth, John attended Warren Point Presbyterian Church; later, his family became part of St. Leon Armenian Church in Paterson. His contributions to St. Leon spanned many decades, from choir member to parish council chairman. *An early tangible contribution was the Christ Tomb that he built in 1940 at the age of 18! To this day, it continues to adorn the Church every year during Holy Week.*

John served in the US Army Air Corps during World War II. After returning home, he attended Rutgers University. He worked in the family carpet business until he retired and closed the store in 2007. John married Arpine “Penny” Chilian at the Paterson church in 1953. He served as best man for the marriage of Der Carnig and Yeretzkian Rose Hallajian. During Der Carnig’s eulogy to John, he addressed John’s family, “He was the best person to everyone; he was the best father to you; he was also my best man.”

He was instrumental in the purchase of 12-61 Saddle River Road site where St. Leon stands today. Because of John and his long friendship with the Kirshner family, the Church was able to purchase the land next door, even though other groups were offering to buy the land at substantially more money.

On January 11, 2004, His Eminence, Archbishop Khajag Barsamian, presented John with the St. Gregory the Enlightener Medal, accompanied by an Encyclical from His Holiness Karekin II, Supreme Patriarch and Catholicos of All Armenians. This is the Highest Honor that can be bestowed on a layman by the Armenian Church.

One of the highlights of John's later life was his trip to Armenia in 2005, where he traveled with a group from St. Leon on invitation from His Holiness, Karekin II. He enjoyed everything in Armenia and was especially touched by young children whose families were no longer able to care for them. While in Armenia, he committed to funding a state-of-the-art orphanage with his late brother Jack in the capital city of Yerevan. The orphanage will be opening its doors shortly.

He was predeceased by his wife, Arpine, and brother Karnig. He is survived by his children, Carol Sukovich, Lynn Nakashian, and John Nakashian and his wife, Jayne; his grandchildren, Christopher and Melanie; his sister, Margaret Jerrahian and husband John and loving nephews and nieces.

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