



Stanley Michalak, Jr.

January 2, 2021

On Saturday, January 2, 2021, Stanley Michalak Jr., beloved husband, father, and grandfather, died at home at the age of 82.

Stanley was born in Reading, Pennsylvania, to Stanley Sr. and Rose Michalak. Stanley graduated from Reading High School and completed his first year of college at Penn State. He then transferred to Albright College in Reading to finish his studies, earning a Bachelor's degree magna cum laude in 1960. He paid his way through college playing jazz piano at night clubs in State College and Reading.

Stanley served as a legislative assistant to Congressman George M. Rhodes (D-PA) before completing a Ph.D. in Politics at Princeton University in 1967. He studied and taught international politics at Franklin and Marshall College (F&M) from 1967-2004, where he was awarded the Honorable John C. and Mrs. Kunkel Professorship in Government, chaired the government department from 1973 to 1976 and received the Christian R. and Mary Lindbeck Award for Distinguished Teaching in 1975. Through his many books and articles, Stanley explored themes of power politics, competing conceptions of foreign policy, and the role of the United Nations. In addition to being a visiting scholar at both the Foreign Policy Research Institute and UC Berkeley, he was also the director of the Center for Liberal Arts and Society, which launched a federally funded Learn and Serve Program at F&M.

Stanley loved his students, the College, and the larger Lancaster community. He was an enthusiastic mentor to his students, sometimes teaching multiple generations of the same family over his decades of service at F&M. Some of Stanley's trademarks were his high standards, his addition of wit and playfulness to academic rigor, his resonant laugh, his humility and empathy, and his irreverent teaching style--all of which engaged students at F&M and audiences in the broader community for decades. The Michalak Commons at F&M is dedicated in his honor as an exceptional professor and mentor.

Music was also a long-standing love for Stanley. As an adult, he continued classical music

lessons in Reading, studied jazz in Lancaster, and performed at numerous fundraisers. He liked to play spontaneously in restaurants or other public places when he found an unattended piano.

Together with his wife Beverly, he served on the board of several music and other local foundations including the Lancaster International Piano Festival, the Wolf Museum, the Lancaster Crime Commission Research Committee, and Quest, an organization focused on senior learning. They enjoyed gardening, walks through the countryside, witty banter with family and friends, and entertaining at their home.

Stanley is survived by his wife Beverly, two children, Sarah and David (Juliane), in addition to his three stepdaughters, Kim (Tim), Terri, and Cheryl (Alfonso), and their children Ryan, Jacob, Sam, Lea, David, Michael, and Alex.

Because of COVID-19 restrictions, the family plans a celebration of life at a later date. In lieu of flowers, the Michalak Family asks that gifts in Stanley's memory be directed to Franklin and Marshall College to be added to the fund being established in Stanley's name. Gifts may be made directly to F&M via their online giving page or via US mail. Please note that the gift is for the Stanley J. Michalak Fund.

Comments



“ Dr. and Mrs. Michalak introduced me to the idea of attending Franklin and Marshall College. Mrs. Michalak had developed a friendship with my grandmother Mattie Shoulders in Chattanooga, TN and they were convinced F&M was where I needed to go after high school. At the time, I couldn't imagine going so far from home for college, but the Michalaks promised they would take care of me. I never had the pleasure (or from what I hear the challenge) of taking a class with Dr. Michalak, but I remember one or two really lovely lunches with Mrs. Michalak. Following their advice and attending F&M was one of the best decisions of my life. I'm so sorry to hear of Dr. Michalak's passing. My prayers and gratitude are forever with the family.

Porsche Roberson - March 01 at 11:54 PM



“ My deepest condolences to the family of Professor Stanley Michalak. I was a student of his during my freshman year at Franklin and Marshall College for the 2008-09 term. He was definitely my favorite government professor. I shared many great memories with him even after graduating from Franklin and Marshall College and he was also a fan of my singing performances. I will miss him dearly.

Michael Varacalli - February 16 at 08:00 PM



“ I was a student of Dr. Michalak at The Ohio State University in 1965-66, I had him for two courses and he was the best professor/mentor I had. He respected everyone's point of view but demanded that you back your opinion with academic diligence. I stayed in contact with him down through the years and am truly sad to hear of his passing.

Richard T. Bunner - February 05 at 08:44 PM



“ Please pardon my typos.

Richard T. Bunner - February 05 at 08:46 PM



“ My belated and sincerest condolences to Professor Michalak's wife Beverly and to his entire family.

I was among the lucky ones. It was not just that Stanley Michalak did not fail me in his Statistics class, which I feared he might. It's that he caused me to understand that good writing alone did not suffice. To be compelling and worth the time to read it, writing needed to be backed up by research and thought.

When he returned the first paper I wrote for him, the cover sheet was scrawled with a note. "Nice writing!" Every subsequent page was stamped "Bullshit!" He was right, and I knew it.

Just before my graduation from F&M, I went to see Stanley in his office. He asked about my plans. He had already warned our class that going to graduate school was a dumb idea if we wanted to make money, citing as proof the average salaries of PhD's at the time. I told him that I was heading to Europe, somehow, to write. He reached up onto his shelf and presented me with a gift, a copy of George Orwell's debut autobiographical novel about poverty, *Down and Out in London and Paris*. With an impish giggle, he suggested I read it before embarking on my journey. The gift was characteristic: a lesson with a wrapping of humor. What would endure for me was not just the cautionary tale of Orwell's explorations, his work and the denizens of the filthy kitchen of verminous "Hotel X" in Paris, or the eccentrics like the miser who ate cats, or the crippled hobo Bozo who knew the names of every star, but Stanley's sly, sweet, ironic validation. And his kindness.

Nearly 40 years later I received an eight-page, hand-written letter of praise for a book of mine that had recently been published. In it, Stanley gave a close, thoughtful and enthusiastic review. On a subsequent phone call, he reported to me that after he finished reading my book he had gone to his records to look me up. Given my grades, it was surprising, he said with warm delight, that I could have written such a good book.

One of the odd things about this life is how great an impact on a life brief encounters with certain people can make, how important those people can remain to you over a lifetime.

I will be forever grateful to Stanley for helping to set the course of mine. The last time I saw him was in 2011. I had taken my youngest son, Isaiah, to F&M on a college tour. After, we went to visit Stanley at his house. He drove us all around the countryside, to meet the Amish farmer across the street (filling us in on the use of cellphones by the Amish men) and to an Amish farm where he bought some eggs and some sweets for dessert from a bonneted young woman. After a great steak dinner, we sat outside until dark and talked politics -- both academic and national. Stanley shared proud stories about his family. And he counseled Isaiah about choosing a college. On the drive back to Manhattan that night, Isaiah could not stop grinning about Professor Michalak's blunt, salty, knowledgeable and funny conversation. It no longer mattered to me if he attended F&M. He had gotten a taste of its best. Farewell, Professor Michalak. And thank you.

Bruce Frankel - January 20 at 08:26 AM



“ Professor Michalak was my favorite government professor at F&M. I recall studying the Russian invasion of Afghanistan. He made me think, and he engaged me. May he rest in peace. Rick Diana F&M '82

Rick Diana - January 19 at 06:35 PM



“ I suppose it is self indulgent to look back at one's college career as an extraordinary period in the history of the college. However, i cannot help thinking that during the 70's through 80's that Professor Michalak was part of a triumvirate of incredibly gifted and dynamic professors that made F and M the superb liberal arts institution that has enabled it to prosper into the 21st century. Those reading this know of whom i speak- the Pinskens, Schiers, Wises, Stephenson, Atheys . These men -Stan Michalak chief amongst them- were educators of the highest caliber. Those of us who studied at F and M in the humanities during the late 20th century probably all proudly consider these men our mentors and maintain a recognition and appreciation that we have been profoundly shaped by them

Eric Morrison - January 09 at 05:21 AM



“ Belated but most sincere condolences to Beverly and to Sarah, David and Julianne, Kim and Tim, Terri, and Cheryl and Alfonso, and to the children, some of whom I've had the pleasure of meeting
My friendship with Stan goes back more than 60 years. It's true that 10-year olds don't choose their parents' friends and busy schedules and geographical distance between Reading and Lancaster made their interactions to be something planned and special, often likely on a weekend that Stan would be looking in on his parents and Reading family.....very likely....and also I'm remembering shared Reading Chamber music dates.....what a great combination of intuitive wit and 'book learning' and intellectual brilliance....and musical acumen he possessed.... I am grateful to my parents, and for the years of friendship that followed. I will miss him. Beverly—you and Stan were always so much fun to be with. I enjoyed so much the time that Cathy and I happened to run into you for jazz at the Pressroom. Much love to you and your family from us all

seth mellon - January 08 at 09:25 PM



“ Professor M, as he always asked me to call him, arguably paved the path for me to become a college professor. His unflinching support and kindness carried me through my PhD, and even though I was out in the midwest in Chicago, he often checked in on me while I was making my way through graduate school. Professor M and his wonderful wife also had my family and I over to their lovely home just after I graduated from F&M in 2009. I wasn't sure of this at the time, and was incredibly nervous about the path ahead, but Professor M told me I'd make it through graduate school. I owe you a ton, Professor Michalak. Thank you for being such an exceptional mentor and such a wonderful, inspiring soul.

- Aditi Malik

Aditi Malik - January 08 at 05:21 PM



“ Beverly and family - Stanley was such a huge force for good in my time at F&M. As so many have said, he taught us how to critically analyze arguments, cogently write and analytically think about topics. Whether it be in social sciences or in medicine, where I ended up, these skills are needed more than ever in a democracy. The summer of 1997 I was able to spend working one on one with him as Stanley's research assistant for his book “A Primer in Power Politics”. It was one of the best summers of my life.
I'm glad I was able to see him a few years ago again in DC at the Willard Hotel at the F&M reception for the government professors. Thank you again for sharing this great scholar with all of us.

Tim Langan - January 08 at 08:05 AM



“ My deepest condolences Beverly and family.

Dr Michalak had a significant impact on my life. As the first to go to college in my family, he understood my background, but also my potential and the importance of a good education. What set Dr Michalak apart was his respect for the positions of each and every student. As I look back he was not only engaging in the classroom, but also very wise in his subtle life lessons!

I will never forget both his and your kindness when you attended my wedding in Lancaster shortly after graduating in 1975.

George Violand

George Robert Violand - January 06 at 11:37 AM



“ The most influential professor I have had. And one of the most important mentors in my life. Period. He corralled and pushed my thoughts like none other, like a chess player (and I've been extremely lucky in having been shaped by some amazing teachers and professors as I was growing up). I think I wrote some of my best stuff under his wing, pushed to draw outside the lines using history and theory to understand future events that to this day mirror whatever we spoke about back in the late 90s. First paper was full of red marks. I've continued to make sure to cut the fat from everything I write and do since then. My condolences to his loved ones. He was an extraordinary mentor and friend.

fernando gramaglia - January 05 at 04:01 PM



“ BPB is following this tribute.

BPB - January 05 at 12:09 PM



“ I owe a lot to this Professor Michalak. He handed me my arse many times, and in the process taught me about deep critical analysis and writing, and made me strive HARD to get my first A at F&M. Professor Michalak was epic; an icon of the Government Department; and once - just once - I wish I could've heard him play the jazz piano.

Thank you Dr. Michalak for all that you imparted, and the ways you prepared us. I often wish I was processing this crazy world in a discussion or a class with you. Rest in peace.



Jen Eaton - January 05 at 10:51 AM



“ I joined the F&M faculty the same year Stan did. Over the ensuing years Stan and I interacted in many ways; as committee members, as advocates for professional and social issues. Most of the time, but not always, we were in agreement. When we were on opposite sides of an issue it was always on mutually respected terms. The one characteristic about Stan not mentioned in his obituary is that he was just a nice guy. That is how I remember him.

My condolences to the family. He made the world a better place and he will be missed!

Don Tyrrell - January 05 at 09:48 AM



“ Thank you for your kindness, your advocacy when I needed it as a student at F&M and for the gift of your knowledge. It was an honor to be taught by you and to have known you. My sincerest condolences to your loving family.



Sughey Cruz-Everts - January 05 at 07:51 AM



“ I'm sorry for your loss. Praying for Alex and his family.

Abihail - January 04 at 08:21 PM