

Joy Renjilian-Burgy, 81, of Wellesley, MA, passed away on January 14, 2024 in Boulder, CO, attended by her husband Don and her twin sons Sarkis and Lucien. Joy leaves behind her 3 sisters: Josh, Sally, and Margaret, and a large extended family.



Joy was born on December 9, 1942, in Holyoke, MA, to Armenian parents Sarkis Renjilian and Aznive Melidonian, who came to the US after fleeing the Armenian Genocide. She was a graduate of Holyoke High School, where she excelled as a student, athlete, singer, and actor. Joy went on to attend Mt Holyoke College, earning a B.A. in education and Spanish language. She did her graduate work in higher education and Spanish language at Harvard University.

Nicknamed “Alegria” (joy/happiness) by her colleagues, Joy’s professional career, success as an author, and academic accomplishments were prolific, but Joy was foremost a teacher whose love for students spanned over 50 years of passion, energy, and innovation in the classroom. She established a professional home base at Wellesley College where she was tenured for more than 45 years. A consummate sports fan, Joy could often be found on the sidelines of NCAA women’s sporting events when she wasn’t acting as department Chair, writing textbooks, presiding over a conference, or walking the halls at Wellesley, Harvard, or Boston College.

Joy was the recipient of dozens of awards, fellowships, and grants including the Harvard Foreign Language teaching prize. In 2017, Joy was honored by King Felipe VI of Spain with “La Orden de la Cruz de Isabel la Católica”, one of the highest civil honors awarded by the Spanish government for individuals fostering the study of Spanish language and culture. When she wasn’t at work, she was often... working! Joy was an author and co-author of many works, served on many Boards, and Joy was acting President for the Armenian International Women’s Association (AIWA) and a force for both women’s and Armenian causes. In the in-between moments she loved to cook, host, watch Boston sports, advocate for those less fortunate, and respond to the many people who sought her professional and

emotional counsel.

Over the years, Joy (and Don) welcomed countless people into their home. Their dinner table was a place where royals mixed with refugees and students, and over time, through laughter and food, the many disparate individuals were woven into one big Joy-full family. Beyond all the awards and accolades, it's perhaps the potency, color, and warmth of this extended family tapestry that Joy will best be remembered for.