

CHARLES JOSEPH CHURUKIAN

A wonderful culminating event for a long rewarding career took place at the banquet of the National Society of Histotechnology Convention, Seattle, WN., September 26, 2010. Over 1,000 people honored him with a standing ovation when announced: "Charles Joseph Churukian is the recipient of the prestigious *Histotechnologist of the Decade Award*." With the long walk to the podium and with his picture on huge screens, many were clicking their cameras to take advantage of connecting his face to his name – known to some as the "guru of special stains."

Charles Joseph Churukian was born in Rochester in 1928 to Kessabtsis immigrant parents, Joseph Garabed and Christine Anna Aintablian Churukian. After completing the bachelor's degree in theology at Gordon College, rather than accepting a pastoral call, Charles remained at home to help with the care of his elderly parents. While doing so, he completed an accredited course in Histologic Technique that created an interest in the medical field. While receiving on-the-job training at a local hospital laboratory, he enrolled in numerous science classes and attended many workshops and scientific seminars to gain necessary education that qualified him to become certified as a histotechnologist by the American Society of Clinical Pathology and to be licensed by the state of New York as a Medical Technologist.

As a profession, Charles concentrated his efforts in the medical field, namely Histology. For a span of 54 years he worked in histology laboratories at Rochester General Hospital, Genesee Hospital, and for 40 of those years, he supervised the Histochemistry Laboratory at University of Rochester Medical Center in the Department of Pathology.. Because of his expertise, he traveled to inspect various laboratories in this country for the National Accrediting Agency for Clinical Laboratory Sciences. In 1980, he became a member of and consultant for the Biological Stain Commission: the most prominent agency in the world that certifies dyes for medical, biological and other purposes.

Numerous awards have been granted to him throughout his career. In 1993, he received the *University of Rochester Distinguished Service Award* because of his development of many new and cost-saving methods in the laboratory including innovative staining methods that speed up diagnostic time. Other awards given were the *Golden Forceps Award*, *Journal Of Histotechnology Editors Award*, *Fellow of the New York Society Award*, *J.B. McCormick Award*, *Diamond Cover Award* and *Histotechnologist of the Year Award*. For being an innovator and for pioneering the use of the microwave oven for many staining procedures greatly reducing time required, and for presenting the best scientific seminar using microwave technology, he was given the *William J. Hacker Memorial Award*.

Published in the Journal of Histotechnology (June issue 1979) is the article on the well-known Churukian-Schenk stain used to demonstrate malignant neuroendocrine tumors. Dr. Eric Schenk, now deceased, was a pathologist, researcher and his mentor at the UR Medical Center. Also developed by Charles was the Strong Fast Stain now used in operating rooms for fast diagnosis, and also in Cytology laboratories to determine the type of cells in various body fluids.

He has authored or co-authored 55 scientific publications and has presented over 100 scientific lectures at conferences and meetings. The Biological Stain Commission distributed his *Manual of Special Stains* to every teaching hospital in United States making his name well-known among pathologists and histotechnologists of this country as well as other countries who have purchased his staining manual. With modern technology available, the manual is now available on the web. Until age 80, he presented seminars and workshops at local and state meetings as well as at the annual conference of the National Society for Histotechnology, of which he is a founding member. He is also a founding member of the NY State Society

This year, 2010, at age 82, the National Society President surprised him with a telephone call requesting that he return once again and attend the annual conference in Seattle- all expenses paid. It was at this conference, he was honored and humbled as he put closure to his public career with the Society.. At this conference, he was presented with the prestigious award:

Histotechnologist of the Decade

His degree in theology helped in many ways for him to be involved giving spiritual guidance to others.. For many years he could be found preaching at the Open Door Mission, serving in leadership roles of various boards at church, and teaching Sunday School classes to adults and children. His book of poetry, *Poems for the Spiritual Life*, has offered inspiration and spiritual guidance to many people.

His career did not limit his involvement in volunteer service to others-be it religious or secular. Spiritual direction based upon Biblical principles has been his basis offered to young and old alike. For some years he has been counseling weekly with male drug and alcohol addict inmates at the county jail and following up with them after they are released. Helping the homeless and destitute men find clothing at a Store House and serving meals at a Dining Caring Center has given additional opportunities to serve others.. Presently, he continues working part-time at the laboratory and does volunteer work as strength and time allows.

Relying on God's strength, guidance, wisdom along with a steadfast faith in God has been his mainstay. Philippians 4:13... always offered much encouragement to him: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me."