



Calyampudi Radhakrishna Rao – As a Family Man

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Received: 28 May 2024; Revised: 30 May 2024; Accepted: 01 June 2024

Calyampudi Radhakrishna Rao, popularly known as CR Rao and henceforth addressed as Rao in this text, was first and foremost a loving and devoted family man. He married Bhargavi in 1948 and since that day their relationship was one of mutual admiration and respect, and unwavering support. Rao took great pride in his wife’s competence, academic achievements, her intelligence and ability to articulate her opinion on a wide variety of topics. Bhargavi was his constant companion, traveling the world over with him, creating the supportive atmosphere needed for pursuing his academic activities, and providing the social environment to foster his relationships with his colleagues and students. Many remember evenings at the Rao’s home filled with lively conversation and debates, sumptuous meals, and warm hospitality. Bhargavi was truly the love of his life in many ways. The Rao family grew to include their daughter Tejaswini and son-in-law Vincent O’Neill, son Veerendra and daughter-in-law Malini, grandsons Amar, and his wife Mitra along with a great grandson Khai, and Rohith and his partner Hannah Garfield. Rao, despite his busy days filled with teaching, research, administration, and travels took personal interest in overseeing the activities of his children. His children thought of him as being quiet and serious when they were young but soon as young adults realized and recognized his sensitive, caring, and humorous nature that nurtured them. His grandchildren were a source of boundless joy whom he entertained with trips to the park and conversation involving interesting and amusing questions. They remember their grandfather not as the renowned scientist or the stoic face seen in many of his photographs but as the kind, generous, funny, and mischievous man that he really was. Rao and his great grandson had a special bond, Rao a 102-year-old man and Khai less than a year old. Their faces lit up when they saw each other and they enjoyed each other’s company in a beautiful silence filled with affectionate smiles and gurgling laughs. Rao was very fond of children and the feelings were mutual. He would regale them with riddles and jokes that many of them remember and talk about until today as adults. He was a Pied Piper as his colleague’s children would follow him and Bhargavi during their evening walks with the added attraction of finding candy in Uncle Rao’s pockets.

Rao was a creature of habit, cherishing daily walks with his wife and the morning ritual of reading his newspaper. After moving to the US, every evening, like clockwork, he would indulge in a glass of wine at exactly 7 pm while watching Jeopardy and Wheel of Fortune or his favorite sport, tennis with his family. Rao enjoyed watching all forms of sports and considered himself quite the badminton player. One of his favorite pastimes while living on the Indian Statistical Institute campus in Kolkata was playing badminton with colleagues

and friends after his evening walks. Rao loved the arts, especially dance. He saw Ram Gopal perform in London when he was a student in Cambridge in the early 1940s. This event started his lifelong interest in dance. He promoted many Indian classical dancers as a member of various cultural associations in Calcutta and Delhi, and he also served as president of the Kuchipudi Academy in Delhi. In addition, he enrolled Tejaswini in dance classes as a five year old and she became an accomplished performer of two Indian classical dance styles, Bharata Natyam and Kuchipudi. He fostered his love for the arts in his children, enriching their lives. Rao also had a passion for photography, capturing his international travels with Bhargavi in film from the early 1950's, taking hundreds of treasured photographs of his family, colleagues, and friends. He loved giving his friends enlargements of photographs he had taken of them. Many of his photographs have appeared in magazines and newspapers. Rao's other interests were gardening, writing humorous articles, and a little bit of cooking as well. He had a green thumb and could grow any flower or vegetable from seeds. Mothering each of the plants and watching them spring to life was a source of relaxation and pleasure. His subtle sense of humor that he is known for is also reflected in published articles that he has written on everyday incidents that he has observed. So the powerful sense of observation that made him the scientist that he was extended to every aspect of his life. Rao enjoyed occasionally giving instructions on how to prepare a dish, doing all the prep work and took delight in teasing Bhargavi that he taught her to cook.

Rao valued the importance of education and established educational scholarships in many universities for talented and disadvantaged students. He also instituted medals at various Institutions to recognize accomplished Statisticians. Acute sense of observation and discipline made Rao the remarkable scientist and statistician but family and friends best remember him for his humility, affectionate and compassionate heart, gentle nature, and a mischievous sense of humor that never failed to bring a smile.