



H. Leonardo Aguila

March 30, 2020

Hector Leonardo Aguila, 63, of West Hartford, CT, passed on March 30, 2020. Leonardo (or Leo), as he was known to friends, was born on November 11, 1956, in Santiago, Chile, the oldest child of Arnolando Aguila Vega and Sofia Silvia Garay Vidal. His childhood was spent in Chile and he graduated with a degree in Biochemistry from the Universidad de Concepción.

His journey to the US in 1983 was a leap of faith when, as newlyweds, he and his wife Daniza uprooted their lives so that he could start a Ph.D in Cell Biology (Immunology focus) at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in New York City. It was in New York where they started a family together, eventually making the cross-country trip with a toddler so that he could complete postdoctoral training at Stanford University in Palo Alto, CA. After 11 years in California, in 1997, he earned an Associate Professor position in the University of Connecticut Graduate School, Department of Immunology. After a beautifully remembered trip across the country, his family settled in West Hartford, CT.

A fundamental truth of his life is that as long as he had his wife and children near (physically or in spirit), then that was all he needed to be happy. He wanted his family to share his experiences and to learn about the world with him. And even as times grew difficult, all he wanted was for his family to be well and near him. This enduring love is treasured in this moment.

Leo was passionate about science, his research, and intellectual curiosity. He always sought to impart his own joy and wonder at the world to those he surrounded himself with. While he was a true scientist at heart, he was also an advocate and connoisseur of the arts. He loved poetry and all types of writing, especially the words of Pablo Neruda and Walt Whitman, and the house was always filled with music from his extensive collection. His small joys included laughter, a bottle of good red wine, and a flavorful seafood meal. He had an appreciation of nature and a deep love of the ocean, born of spending extensive time on the coast growing up. Many family vacations to the beach contained long, 5am walks along the shore and he always returned hours later with stories of all he saw along the way. His love of learning extended to a love of travel and in recent years he had spent time in Rome, Madrid, Croatia, and Mexico City with his wife. Above all, he will be remembered for his boisterous spirit, the quirkiness that he embraced and celebrated, and the quiet stubbornness he held onto through his life.

He is survived by his wife, Daniza Mandich, and their three children, Carolina of Boston, MA; Nicolas of Manchester, NH; and Gabriela and her husband Michael Conway of Alexandria, VA. He is also survived by his mother, Sofia Garay, his siblings, Eugenia and Rodrigo, and numerous nieces and nephews; all from Chile.

Memorial services will be private due to the current world health crisis, but his family deeply appreciates the love and care they have received from family, friends, and community in this time.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Leonardo's memory to the Saint Francis Foundation (to support cancer care) or to the Smithsonian Institution.

Tribute Wall

LK

“ I just wanted to say that it was my great pleasure to interact with Leonardo as a fellow faculty member at UCONN Health. I first became acquainted with Leonardo through his leadership role in graduate student education, and for many of the past years I have taught in a course that he runs. I have always been impressed with his love and dedication for science and for education. Coupled with his good nature and truly friendly and adventurous spirit, it was always a pleasure to work and interact with him. There were few like him and our community has suffered a significant loss.
-Larry Klobutcher

Larry Klobutcher - April 19, 2020 at 12:04 PM

JS

“ Juan C Salazar purchased the With Deepest Sympathy Gift Basket for the family of H. Leonardo Aguila.



Juan C Salazar - April 18, 2020 at 07:34 AM

JS

“ Querido amigo descansa en paz. Dejas un gran vacío en este mundo en el cual disfrutaste tanto en compañía de Daniza, tus hijos, tus amigos y tus pupilos. Recordaremos para siempre tu poesía, tu música, tu amor por la vida y por la ciencia pura. Añoramos tu fervor por el bien común para todos, sobre todo aquellos que sufren tanto en tu Chile querido. Descansa en paz querido amigo. Nunca te olvidaremos.

Juan Carlos Salazar y Olga H Toro-Salazar

Juan C Salazar - April 18, 2020 at 07:27 AM

FF

“ From Jianbin Ruan & Family purchased the Beautiful Dreams for the family of H. Leonardo Aguila.



From Jianbin Ruan & Family - April 10, 2020 at 10:05 PM

LC

“ So long Leonardo, I will sorely miss your mischievous sense of humor - we laughed until we cried. My sincerest condolences to your family, it was a real honor to have Carolina in my lab. Thank you for some great memories. Linda

Linda Cauley - April 07, 2020 at 04:19 PM

BC

“ I was in the UConn Department of Immunology when Leonardo joined us and the positive effect of his intelligence and personality were immediately apparent. Since that time he was essentially the soul of the Immunology Department. While his intelligence, most often demonstrated by his wonderful questions and insights at seminars will be remembered, I will most remember him in his morning "rounds", cup of coffee in hand, visiting and chatting with many investigators in their labs. He will be sorely missed.

Bob Clark

Bob Clark - April 07, 2020 at 03:46 PM

KW

“ Leonardo was such a great colleague and gentlemen! It was truly a great loss of all of us. We will always remember you.

Kepeng Wang - April 07, 2020 at 02:52 PM

AN

“ *What a beautifully written tribute to such a great guy. Knowing him for the last 20 years as a colleague has been an honor, we had endless fits of laughter through the years. It’s hard to believe he is gone and we all miss him. Tony Vella*



Anthony - April 07, 2020 at 01:14 PM

PM

“ *Leonardo had such a wonderful spirit and liveliness about him. I can’t tell you how many times he made me laugh. He was a wonderful colleague and friend. I will miss him dearly.*

Peter Maye - April 07, 2020 at 10:13 AM

MF

“ *Mary Fiel-Gan purchased the Sweet Tranquility Basket for the family of H. Leonardo Aguila.*



Mary Fiel-Gan - April 06, 2020 at 02:36 PM

BZ

“ *Leonado was surely a super nice person and extremely dedicated scientist. It is such a unbearable lost to all of us! Will always remember you. Beiyan*

Beiyan Zhou - April 04, 2020 at 10:09 AM

CA

“ Your beautifully written tribute captured the essence of Leo's personality. It has been a pleasure to share friendship and social occasions with him. He was a Renaissance man with his appreciation for the arts and his delicious food preparation (especially seafood). But it was apparent that his primary love was for his family and the special time you spent together. We are so sorry for his untimely departure, but will remember him very fondly. Our heartfelt sympathy is with you in this great loss.

Cynthia, Bruce, and Bryan Albertelly

Cynthia Albertelly - April 04, 2020 at 08:49 AM

PD

“ I am so thankful of his kindness and help. Thanks to him my life changed in science. He was a great man and a wonderful and talented scientist. All my thoughts are with his family now. His legacy will continue for many years.

Paula Hernandez and Esteban Diaz - April 03, 2020 at 10:00 PM

DS

“ I have so many happy memories with Leo, and our families together. Eating delicious BBQ and having Leo's special Christmas soup. I will cherish these memories forever. Sending all my love Daniza, Carolina, Nick & Gabriela.

-Daniela

Daniela V Spanos - April 03, 2020 at 07:45 PM

MO

“ *Mayu Inaba and Hideyuki Oguro purchased the Koshier Tower of Treats for the family of H. Leonardo Aguila.*



Mayu Inaba and Hideyuki Oguro - April 03, 2020 at 12:14 PM

DE

“ *De Seba, Cate y Elena. purchased the Simply Elegant Spathiphyllum for the family of H. Leonardo Aguila.*



De Seba, Cate y Elena. - April 03, 2020 at 11:57 AM



“ *Peaceful White Lilies Basket was purchased for the family of H. Leonardo Aguila.*



April 02, 2020 at 08:54 PM

CB

“ Leo was a man for all seasons. He was a man of science, a humanist, a poet, a musician, a father, a husband, and a dear friend. Leo could discuss evolutionary biology, politics, history, tell us about his research in immunology, and just as easily recite Neruda. Daniza, Nicolas, Carolina, and Gabriela, thank you for sharing Leo with us throughout all these years of friendship. I will forever hold on to the dear memories,

Carlos Badiola

Carlos Badiola - April 02, 2020 at 05:33 PM

SH

*I am a gringo, Stephen Hunter, and I live in DC with Veronica del Río. We love, and will always remember Leo and cherish memories of his enthusiasm and Chilean spirit at his house with family, Love to Danisa and family,
- Stephen y Veronica ❤️❤️*

Stephen Hunter - April 02, 2020 at 08:58 PM

EL

Indeed, un amigo eterno, siempre estimulándote, cruzándote los hombros en un abrazo de mano apretada que te aseguraba “ todo va a estar bien” ... te extrañamos y extrañaremos eternamente, amigo, hermano. Ya me imagino las conversaciones que ya tendrán con Gastón en el infinito... con un vaso de vino tinto... chileno por supuesto salud hermano!!!

Eliana - April 03, 2020 at 10:51 AM



“ Fruit Abounds was purchased for the family of H. Leonardo Aguila.



April 02, 2020 at 05:07 PM

CB

“ Carlos and Veronica Badiola. purchased the Ocean Breeze Spray for the family of H. Leonardo Aguila.



Carlos and Veronica Badiola. - April 02, 2020 at 10:34 AM

VB

“ it's hard to describe the countless wonderful memories we shared with Leo, and all of you. Whenever we were planning gatherings at our home, Carlos used to place "los Leos" on top of the list, "no party without the Leos". Because as his family well described, for Leo his family was him.

My family will terribly miss the "Christmas Soup", his deliciously prepared meals that he so joyfully and lovingly prepared for us in countless occasions. I will personally miss our endless conversations in his kitchen table sharing life experiences and his beloved memories with his grandmother.

I will forever hold on to the strong and deep relationship we forged with love, care, respect and admiration for each other. I'm comforted on the fact that our families will continue this relationship in our journeys.

Thank you, Leo, for all the love you gave us.

Your friend,

Veronica A. Badiola.

veronica A badiola - April 02, 2020 at 10:19 AM

RA

“ *Hermanito querido, siempre el afecto y los recuerdos que quedarán por siempre. Descansa después de tu lucha dura , dejas personas maravillosas y cosas muy buenas , por las que vale y valió la vida , en eso trascenderás mucho más de lo que tú mismo creíste. Un abrazo desde siempre Hector Leonardo*

Tu hermano

Rodrigo Águila

rodrigo aguila - April 02, 2020 at 07:32 AM