

In Memoriam

Diana Kamal (1947-2006)

Diana Lufkin Kamal, who was well known to the Middle Eastern and international education communities, passed away on April 19, 2006, following a long illness. At the time, she was senior vice president of Washington, DC-based AMIDEAST, a major private, nonprofit organization focusing on educational development and educational exchange in the Middle East and North Africa.

Ms. Kamal was born on August 6, 1947, in Geneva, Switzerland, and spent much of her early life in Lebanon, where her family settled in the village of Wadi Chahrour. There, she and her seven siblings grew up speaking English and Arabic at home and French in school. She attended the Collège Protestante de Jeunes Filles in Ras Beirut for most of her precollege years, and completed her undergraduate studies in Arabic language and literature and graduate studies in linguistics at the Université St. Joseph. Concurrently, she took courses at the American University of Beirut.

In 1972, she and her husband, Kamal Kamal, moved to the Washington, DC area. She put her unique education and language skills to use at the International Center for Language Studies, where she taught English, French, and Arabic for several years.

In 1980, Ms. Kamal joined AMIDEAST, to which she devoted the remainder of her professional life. She served as coordinator of a job training project for Moroccan women from 1981-83 and director of a human resources development project in the West Bank/Gaza from 1988-91. In 1989, Ms. Kamal was promoted to vice president, and in 1993 to senior vice president of AMIDEAST.

In her 13 years as senior vice president, Ms. Kamal guided AMIDEAST's daily operations and spearheaded the development of new programs that have significantly expanded the organization. During this time, there was a near doubling of the number of AMIDEAST field and project offices in the region, as well as significant growth of AMIDEAST's activities in the areas of educational advising, standardized-test administration, and English language and professional training.

Ms. Kamal's leadership reached far beyond AMIDEAST to the international educational community at large, where she was widely respected and admired by all who had the privilege to work with her. Among other positions, she served on the executive committee of the Alliance for International Educational & Cultural Exchange, as chair of NAFSA's Region VIII in 1991-92, and on steering committees for several NAFSA special interest groups. She was a frequent participant in panels and workshops focusing on international educational exchange, educational development in the Arab world, women in development, and related topics.

Ms. Kamal is survived by her husband, two sons, five sisters, and two brothers. In recognition of Ms. Kamal's dedication to the field of international educational exchange and her commitment to AMIDEAST's mission, and in accordance with the wishes of her family, AMIDEAST has established the Diana Kamal Scholarship Fund to help provide

talented Arab students with the opportunity to pursue U.S. study. Please direct donations to: Diana Kamal Scholarship Fund—AMIDEAST, 1730 M St., N.W., Suite 1100, Washington, DC 20036.

Betsy Laun Maalouf
AMIDEAST

Evelyn Abdalah Menconi (1919-2003)

All of her life, Dr. Evelyn Abdalah Menconi loved the Arab-American community of the greater Boston area. She was born and grew up in West Roxbury and attended Boston University. A consummate educator, Dr. Menconi served as teacher/principal at the USAF Dependents Schools in France and Japan, was a teacher and reading consultant in the Boston Public Schools from 1940 to 1979, and continued her role as an educational consultant and media specialist throughout her life.

Evelyn and her husband Armand lived in Dorchester and together had a rich life surrounded by family and friends. In 1981, she earned her doctorate in education from Boston University. Her dissertation, "An Analysis of Teachers' Perceptions of the Arab World," demonstrated her commitment to promoting understanding of Arab-American culture. She dedicated the work to her parents, Nazirah Haboush and George Abdalah, who emigrated from Syria as teenagers and who "understood the importance of building bridges between east and west."

Dr. Menconi promoted Arab-American culture through the founding of the William G. Abdalah Library, established in her brother's memory, and served as an educational consultant to "The Arabic Hour" television program. She collaborated in the publication of many cookbooks including *Arabic Cooking in America* (1977), together with Yvonne Homsy and Mary Maloof. She wrote articles for numerous publications including *Middle East Resources* where her article, "Arabs in the Boston Area," was published in May of 2000. As she said to family and friends, "This is my story!"

For many years, Evelyn was an avid collector of informational materials for use in educational programs, and shared them with other groups. As she said, "It is a wonderful way to show that we Arab-Americans have inherited a warm and beautiful culture and that the Arabs have made many worthwhile contributions to Western Civilization in the applied arts as well as the fine arts, the sciences and literature."

Dr. Menconi was active in many organizations, including the Dorchester Historical Society, the Lebanese-Syrian Ladies Aid Society, the Syrian-Lebanese Women's Club of Greater Boston, the American Arabic Association, the Nicholas G. Beram Veterans Ladies Auxiliary, and Maloof International. She has received many awards for her service to the Arab-American community.

Evelyn Abdalah Menconi will be remembered as a woman of deep compassion, generosity, love and humility. Her greatest joy was to gather friends and family together for wonderful Arabic food, good conversation, laughter and fun. She was a treasure to all who knew her. Her life-long mission of promoting peace and social justice for all people is a part of her enduring legacy.

Elissa Menconi