



Obituary

Born: Friday, May 24, 1946

Died: Thursday, January 24, 2019

A lover of life, an advocate for peace and justice, a lifelong

Service Summary

Services are to be announced

Location: - *Not available* -

volunteer and teacher, a devoted friend, father, grandfather

and partner, Irving Samuel Penso has departed this Earth.

Irving spent his last days at home, with his family, whom he

loved dearly.

In his 72 years, Irving made an impact on all who knew him.

He was a giver of whatever one needed, whenever one

needed it. A poetic soul, he drew people in with his wisdom

and his innate emotional intelligence. Over the course of his

life, Irving filled the role of counselor, confidant, guide,

listener and at times, father, to so many.

A native of Atlanta, Irving attended Morningside Elementary

and then Grady High School. He went on to attend Georgia

State University, where he studied English and planted the

seeds of the future grammarian and bibliophile he would

become.

In 1968, Irving joined the Peace Corps. He served in the

Minas Gerais region of Brazil, where he developed a deep

love for different cultures and languages. Irving spoke fluent

Portuguese, along with Spanish, bits of French and various

words and phrases in Ladino, Japanese, Chinese, Arabic,

Italian and Korean, among other languages.

Upon returning from Brazil, Irving spent a short time as a

teacher at Anne E. West Elementary School. He was known

there for his charisma, his caring nature and for his

distinctive curly hair and full beard.

Eventually, Irving followed his passion for other cultures and

for teaching to ELS Language Centers, in Atlanta. In his

37-year tenure at ELS, he served in both teaching and

administrative positions, touching the lives of nearly 10,000

students from all over the world. Irving often became an

advisor for students and for his coworkers, who found

comfort in his compassion.

ELS is also where Irving met his dear Jan. His voice carried

the same passion and excitement no matter how many times

he told the story of the first moment he met her.

Jan and Irving married on a hot day in June at Winn Park in

Atlanta. Years later, they would continue to celebrate their

anniversaries there, and the park would also become the site

of family picnics and play outings once their daughters,

Becca and Lillia, were born.

Irving's passion for giving manifested itself through a long

career of volunteerism. He was very politically active,

lending his voice and presence to causes from voting rights to

reproductive justice to immigrant rights and environmental

protection. He also spent nearly a decade as a volunteer with

Hospice Atlanta.

He was an avid learner and a voracious reader and began

attending Georgia State University once again in his sixties

as part of the GSU 62 program. He took his coursework very

seriously and though he didn't have to earn a grade, he

insisted on doing so.

Above all else, Irving valued and loved his family, the most

important entity in his life. He was devoted to making them

happy, ensuring they were always well fed, that they were

appreciated and that they were noticed. Irving never missed

an opportunity to let them know how much he loved them,

through both prolific spoken and written words.

Irving never sought the limelight, though he was often the

reason things happened. He lived to make others happy and it

was rare to see someone around him not smiling.

Irving is survived by his wife of 39 years, Jan Callum, his

daughters, Becca and Lillia Callum-Penso, son-in-law

Shannon McKamey, grandchildren, Miles and Ella Penso-

McKamey, brother, Elliott Penso and sister-in-law, Pescha

Penso, and a number of dear nieces and nephews.

He also leaves many many friends.

In lieu of flowers, please consider a donation to any of the following:

ACLU - <https://www.aclu.org/>

El Refugio - <https://www.elrefugiostewart.org/>

WCLK - <https://www.wclk.com/>

Atlanta Community Food Bank - <https://acfb.org/>

Georgia WAND - <https://gawand.org/>

Doctors Without

Borders - <https://www.doctorswithoutborders.org/>