Shanti Rajagopalan

Dr Shanti Rajagopalan, passed away in 2010 aged 49 after the recurrence of an illness. Shanti was one of the best known and respected members of the ASEG, and was well known within the geophysical profession for her outstanding contributions and service to the profession and the ASEG. She was also one of the most all-round talented members whether it be for her technical capabilities, her bursts of originality or the bubbling personality and sense of fun which delighted all who knew her.

Shanti obtained her BSc with 1st Class Honours from the University of Madras; her MSc from the Centre of Exploration Geophysics, Osmania University, Hyderabad; and her PhD from the University of Adelaide in South Australia. Her wide professional experience included work as a visiting research fellow at the prestigious National Geophysical Research Institute in Hyderabad; she was a lecturer in the University of Adelaide; she worked for a short while with the airborne survey unit of the Bureau of Mineral Resources (BMR, now Geoscience Australia); she spent four years working for CRA/Rio Tinto in exploration geophysics working in Australia and South East Asia; and then as an independent consultant with her own company Earth Bytes, she was a member of the BHP Billiton team which interpreted the results obtained by the revolutionary Falcon airborne gravity gradiometer unit. Wherever she worked she left her mark of fresh ideas and improved processing and interpretation procedures.

Shanti also became very active in ASEG affairs and was a major contributor to the advancement of the Society in many ways. She was President of the Victorian branch in 2001 and 2002 and was involved in organising the first and so far only ASEG conference held in Hobart. She was an Associate Editor of Geophysics from 1998 to 2009 and the Managing Editor of Exploration Geophysics in 2000 and 2001, a role that she reluctantly had to put aside due to increasing family and work commitments as a consultant.

It is particularly noteworthy in the context of this new award that Shanti came to the attention of many ASEG members in 1987 when, as a student member, she was awarded the inaugural Laric Hawkins Award for the most innovative use of a geophysical technique from a paper presented at the ASEG Conference, for her paper: 'The use of "automatic gain control" to display vertical magnetic gradient data'. The method is widely used today and is regarded by many as a standard procedure used in processing data.

Such was Shanti and her contribution to geophysics in Australia and in India, her loss to the science as a source of fresh ideas will be lamented, but she will not be forgotten by those who met her and were inspired by her example. It is fitting that an award to encourage technical excellence by our Student Members should be named in honour of Shanti Rajagopalan, whose wonderful career and significant contribution to our profession can be attributed in part to her initial contribution as a student member at an ASEG conference.