



Geoffrey Wentworth Conrad

December 24, 1947 - December 20, 2021

Geoff died at his home, while surrounded by his family, on December 20, a short time after being diagnosed with pancreatic cancer. During his final weeks, Geoff wanted nothing more than to spend time with the people he loved, especially his wife of fifty years, Karen, whom he adored.

Geoff was born on December 24, 1947, in Boston, Massachusetts, to Albert and Ruth Conrad. He is survived by his wife Karen (née Hildebrant) and his three sons: Matthew, Peter (Jennifer), and Marc (Sarah). He relished being a grandfather to his three grandsons Eben, Oliver, and Geoff, and he delighted in the inside jokes and silly games they shared together. He is also survived by his two brothers, Peter and Marc, and his three sisters, Kathy Grossman, Judy Millener, and Laurie McBride, as well as many nieces and nephews.

Geoff fell in love with archaeology as a child and often said that the 1954 Scrooge McDuck comic book “The Seven Cities of Cibola” was what first sparked his excitement for archaeology. He pursued his interest in past cultures, earning both undergraduate and graduate degrees in anthropology from Harvard University. His study of the pre-Incan Chimú culture at Chan Chan on the north coast of Peru formed the basis of his PhD dissertation.

He worked as a professor of archaeology at Harvard until 1983, when he was hired by Indiana University Bloomington as a professor of archaeology and

also as the director of the Mathers Museum of World Cultures (now the IU Museum of Archaeology and Anthropology). In the 1990s he switched his focus from pre-Columbian Peruvian cultures to the Taíno culture of the Caribbean in the Dominican Republic, studying the Taíno chiefdoms encountered by Christopher Columbus and other early Spanish explorers of the Caribbean.

In addition to his teaching and museum work, he served in multiple administrative roles for IU, including serving as the chair of the anthropology department and working in the Office of the Vice Provost for Research.

Geoff always enjoyed observing the songbirds in his backyard. After retirement, he enthusiastically took up photography, focusing on these birds and other wildlife seen around the neighborhood as well as on his travels with Karen to many locations around the world. He was an avid reader, did the New York Times crossword puzzle daily, and enjoyed summer vacations on a small island off the Maine coast. He had a sharp wit and an air of kindness that endeared him to his colleagues and friends.

A celebration of his life is planned for 2022. In lieu of flowers, please consider a contribution to the Sassafras Audubon Society or IU's Emeriti House.

Tribute Wall

JT

“ Dear Karen,

We were so sorry to hear of Geoff's passing.

I have fond memories of watching the Bruins with him as students. It was my introduction to hockey.

We were also at your wedding and then we shared the house in California in 1971. I remember firing pottery in the back yard and trying to get the beer factory to deliver to the house, to no avail.

Geoff came up to Trent and did a wonderful, stimulating talk. It was so exciting for the students to hear him talk about Empire and Ideology.

I remember also going out to dinner in Miraflores with Geoff. This was when he was working in Moquegua. I think that you were there too and I know that at least one of the boys was there.

As we moved up into the highlands and much of the Chan Chan crowd moved to Moquegua, we have lost track of so many old friends.

We heard of Geoff's passing only this morning via an email from Bob Feldman to Dan Sandweiss.

Geoff was, of course, a wonderful scholar, respected by all his peers. But he also was kind, gentle and possessed of a wonderful sense of humor.

We will miss him.

John and Theresa

John Topic - March 01, 2022 at 10:10 AM

BG

“ Geoff and I are the same age. We spent our summers in neighboring houses on an island in Maine. When we camped out he dug for arrow heads. Our families went to church together on summer Sundays. Afterward, we would go to the drug store and buy comic books. I was with him when he bought that 1954 Scrooge McDuck comic book “The Seven Cities of Cibola” that kicked off his love for archaeology. We would spend Sunday afternoons in the back field swapping our recently purchased comic books and reading the Comics from the Sunday paper. My brother Ken once asked Geoff why he bothered reading the “Nancy” strip by Ernie Bushmiller. Geoff said “because one of these days it’s going to be funny and I don’t want to miss it.” We built rafts out of tree trunks. We would take our skiff out to the middle of the bay, shut off the outboard motor and lay on the bottom of the boat promising not to sit up and look where we were until we felt the boat wash ashore. Killing time by telling jokes. We played all the board games. We dressed up for the Field Day parade – sometimes reluctantly. We made a million memories as kids. Even as we grew older, we would catch up each summer. Our kids grew up together as did our grandkids. He was a very, very special friend and I will miss him and treasure the memories.



Brian Gatley - December 24, 2021 at 02:48 PM

OK

“ *Geoff was a kind person and a brilliant academic. I was honored to know him as a graduate student in Anthropology at IU, where he served as my mentor on several occasions. He was passionate for archaeology and generous with his time and advice towards students and colleagues. My he Rest in Peace. My sincere condolences to his family.*

Olga Kalentzidou - December 23, 2021 at 11:55 AM

JJ

“ *Geoff did so many significant things to build up community, knowledge, institutions, scholars, and the human spirit. I am honored to have known him--and to have been influenced positively by him--for more than three decades. He will be greatly missed but he leaves behind many worthy legacies. Warm condolences to his family and too all who now remember him fondly. --Jason Jackson*

Jason Jackson - December 22, 2021 at 05:36 PM