



## Ronald R. Royce

September 18, 1945 - January 20, 2018

Ronald R. Royce of Bloomington Died Saturday, January 20, 2018 at the IU Health Hospice House in Bloomington.

Ronald R Royce was born on September 18, 1945 in the Bronx. Both his mother, Edna Mae Knell and his father Harold Russell Royce, were native New Yorkers but when Ron was only 18 months, the family moved to Phoenix, Arizona, a better environment for his mother who suffered from asthma. He, his younger sister, Carolyn, and his parents lived on what was then the edges of the city, growing up with the orchard of grapefruit trees his father planted and the cottonwoods along the drainage canal. His father built their house—all stages from design, to foundations, rough carpentry, electrical wiring, plumbing, painting, and finish carpentry. Ron observed it all, developing both the technical expertise and an aesthetic appreciation. From 1996 until 2017, he had his own business in Technical Services, designing and building offices, desks, studies from the floor up, repairing furniture, and restoring antique pieces. His expert knowledge of French finishes made him the right person to restore a cello made by an 18th century French luther. The last piece he completed was a late 18th century French armoire.

The same curiosity and respect for discipline characterized his education. He graduated from North High School in Phoenix in 1963 as Valedictorian. He was a national winner in the 22nd Annual Westinghouse Science Talent search in 1963. He organized the Nautilus Science Club at North that brought together students from diverse backgrounds and interests whose common

goal was science broadly defined. He was one of only three students from Phoenix admitted to Stanford University where he was a National Merit Scholar from 1963 to 1967. Initially in Stanford's Material Sciences, department, he gradually shifted his interests to Psychology with a second major in Anthropology. From 1963 to 1966, he spent each summer at the National Bureau of Standards in Washington DC as a student assistant in research projects such as high-temperature microwave spectroscopy and the development of argon resonance lamps. At Stanford, he held a number of research positions: He was a Research Assistant in the Department of Material Sciences, a Research Assistant in the Department of Psychology on a NSF UG research grant, and a Technical Illustrator in the design of Audio-Visual material for the Stanford-Shockley Science Education project. He served as the Financial Director of the Institute of International Relations, a powerful and innovative student organization at Stanford for which he was presented with a certificate of recognition in September 1967. He also served as President of the Institute for the Study of Contemporary Cultures from 1966-1967. With his growing interest in Latin America, Ron co-edited, with Anya Peterson, *Researches in Latin American Society* in 1968 (published by the Institute for International Relations).

It was at Stanford that he met his wife, Anya Peterson, who had returned to finish her degree. We met at El Capitán, one of Stanford's all-male (soon to change) eating clubs but also in a Physical Anthropology class where we were paired for the head-measuring assignment. Ron graduated with Honors in Psychology in 1967 and went off to Harvard with a fellowship to the prestigious Social Relations Department. We were both busy with studies and work but determined to maintain the long-distance relationship. We were engaged in Cambridge in the middle of one of the coldest winters Cambridge had seen in year.

We were married June 20 at Stanford Memorial Church, published a monograph we co-edited, celebrated my graduation, and departed for Mexico in our 1962 Volkswagen—all in the space of a few weeks. Ron was a co-

principal investigator on a research grant from the Comparative International Program at Harvard; I wanted to pursue my exploration of the Zapotec of Juchitán, Oaxaca I had begun the previous summer. This was the summer of student protests everywhere and Mexico was no exception. Interviewing university programs and personnel was definitely not healthy, nor was being in Mexico City. We decided to go south to the Isthmus of Tehuantepec and see the fiestas in Juchitán. We saw them—Juchitán in all its glory. Our car broke down on our way out of Juchitán. We limped to the border five weeks later, leaking oil all the way. A novel way to test a new marriage.

We both began the Anthropology doctoral program at UC Berkeley in 1968. Ron was a valued member of the Language-Behavior Research Lab, and quickly employed as a research assistant on empirical studies of the relations between language and speech. He was a Teaching Assistant for several classes, and was a research assistant for the Institute of International Studies examining agricultural export systems in Middle America. He was supported by a Special Career Fellowship in the Social Sciences and Humanities from 1969-1971. Ron and I continued our field research in Juchitán, spending all of 1971-1972 there. His research was on the Isthmus Zapotec language but he was also the photographer of the city, its people, and their fiestas. He took more than 3000 photos including remarkably detailed ones of the architecture of the eight sections of the city, both central and rural. These have now become a treasure as the Juchitecos work to rebuild the city after the devastating earthquake of September 8, 2017. They are among the very few images of traditional houses, a model the Juchitecos are seeking. His photos also anchor the digital archive we are creating to provide a physical and social history of Juchitán from 1968 to 2017. He had the prescience to think ahead about how best to preserve all that one generates and accumulates in a long dedication to the study of one place, one region. Field notes, photographs, yes, but also local newspapers, publications and artwork by Zapotec authors and painters, works about the region, material culture, Zapotec costume,

musical recordings—he has curated all of that.

Partnerships in the field over such a long time are rare and priceless. Ron was the best of partners. I tried to describe what that is like in my last book on death in Juchitán: Since the first tentative explorations, we have worked together, learning, sorting out, finding the gaps, figuring out the next questions, grieving for departed Zapotec friends and family, celebrating their births and marriages. His profound knowledge of the Zapotec language has enabled my own working through it to fundamental understandings. His insistence on examining alternative explanations has given the depth that comes from listening to many voices. I am grateful for his knowledge he brings to this collaborative work, and for his presence in my life.

At Indiana University, Bloomington, Ron made a difference in programs and in the mentoring of students. As a Lecturer, he taught Language and Culture for the Anthropology Department. He also developed and offered a two year sequence in the Isthmus Zapotec language. This was invaluable for students who planned to work in the Zapotec region of Oaxaca. The basic text for the course was his grammar of Isthmus Zapotec, something of enduring value, especially for new generations of students, including Juchitecos, who want to understand the language. His mentoring went beyond his teaching of courses—as a voracious reader, his expertise had a global reach and an enviable historical depth. Students benefitted from his perspective on their work and his practical advice about career strategies. He spent as much time with them as they needed, giving them the tools to be better researchers and better writers. He was a member of a number of professional organizations: the American Anthropological Association (honored last year by his 50 years as a member), the Society for Ethnohistory, the Linguistic Society of America, and the American Association of Indexers. Reading all the journals faithfully made it possible and common practice for him to recommend an article that would expand a student's research interests.

Ron was active in the American Indian Studies Research Institute even before it was recognized as an Institute. He was the copy editor and indexer for a

number of volumes from the University of Nebraska Press, Clearwater Publishing Company, Indiana University Press, and other presses. He served as the Chief copy editor for the journal *Anthropological Linguistics* from 1996 to 2001. Rigorous in his standards and in his belief in the necessity of arguments built on evidence, he also had that rare ability to see the forest for the trees. He had the even rarer talent for helping others see how their trees led to a forest.

In the past decade, I had several appointments at the Irish World Academy of Music and Dance at the University of Limerick. Ireland became a favorite destination. We drove the length of the island, especially on the west coast. He became an expert driver on narrow cliff-side roads and negotiating the ever-present roundabouts. Never satisfied with being a casual tourist, Ron began to learn Irish and read history, prehistory, medieval tales, and, in the end, amazed our Irish friends and colleagues with his encyclopedic knowledge.

Ronald R. Royce leaves behind his wife, best friend, and partner Anya Peterson Royce, his sister Carolyn Trowbridge and her husband Keith Bagwell, his niece Gina and her children. He also leaves behind colleagues and good friends across Indiana University, Bloomington, students, both undergraduate and graduate, who claim him as a mentor and friend, our Zapotec family in Juchitán, and wonderful Irish friends. We must also include those whose homes and offices are made beautiful by his restorations or new designs.

We are all diminished by his absence, but his teaching, mentoring, insistence on always doing one's best is there, nagging us to not be satisfied with the comfortable and the easy. This spring, in the spirit of honoring him, we will offer an exhibit in Bloomington of a selection of his 3000+ photographs of the city of Juchitán between 1968 and 1972. In these, he achieved the highest standards of the photographic art as well as the most important elements of ethnographic documentation. All 3000 photographs will be part of a digital archive made available to the people of Juchitán. An opening reception will let

friends come, see the exhibit, exchange Ron stories, eat and drink, and realize how his life has touched so many. You are invited to share a memory or leave an online condolence to the family at [www.allencares.com](http://www.allencares.com).

# Tribute Wall

LG

“ So saddened to just be learning of Ron's passing. We shared a room for a few summers in Washington when we both worked at the National Bureau of Standards. We also had a common interest in railroads and model trains.

Len Gordy  
STS 1962

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Leonard Gordy - April 10, 2021 at 10:54 AM

SV

“ Dear Anya,

What a beautiful obituary you dedicated to Ron! He truly was your beloved soulmate. He left behind a legacy of love, kindness and exacting scholarship. He will be greatly missed by his family, students and friends from around the world. I send my deepest sympathy to you.

Much love,

Sara

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Sara Velez - February 12, 2018 at 05:31 PM



“ Love's Embrace Roses – Purple was purchased for the family of Ronald R. Royce.



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February 02, 2018 at 01:33 AM

HO

“ Dear Anya,  
I was so sorry to learn of your recent loss! The notice in the HT made it very clear that Ron was your soulmate, and you, his. The richness you added to one another's lives flowed from every word. This is just to let you know you will be in my thoughts and prayers in the weeks ahead, just as you will be in the thoughts and prayers of so many others who had admired and loved you! Holly

Holly - January 29, 2018 at 01:07 PM

SC

“ May his memory be for a blessing. My thoughts are with you, Anya.

Selene Carter - January 26, 2018 at 06:40 PM

JC

“ So sorry to learn of Ron's passing. I so fondly remember our little classes in Isthmus Zapotec--Ron patiently teaching language and culture; and with Anya gently guiding me onto the path of discovery.

Jeffrey Cohen - January 25, 2018 at 01:16 PM

JJ

“ My thoughts are very much with you and will all those who were touched by Ron's richly lived life. Warmest condolences.

Jason Jackson - January 25, 2018 at 08:03 AM



“ Simply Lily was purchased for the family of Ronald R. Royce.



January 24, 2018 at 09:47 PM

PS

“ With deepest sympathy to you, Anya, upon the loss of your beloved husband, partner and excellent collaborator on the Isthmus Zapotec language and culture. His many contributions and legacy will be long remembered by all those he mentored and especially his family and friends among the Juchitecos who can draw upon his photos to rebuild their city. He exemplifies the best in research and human interaction and kindness.

*Paula W. Sunderman*

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**Paula W. Sunderman** - January 24, 2018 at 09:55 AM

RG

“ I read the OBIT in the HT early this morning, what an incredible person!

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**Roy Graham** - January 23, 2018 at 05:14 AM