

## Memories of Ron

Bev Abrams

Sitting in an Internet Café in the Alps, we received some of the most shocking news that we have ever experienced...A brief e-mail from Evely informed us that Ron had just died and that his death was being investigated. As we sat at the computer stunned, memories began rushing back to us.

I first encountered Ron by phone exactly twenty-five years ago, just after accepting my job at the temple. Still young and pretty shy, I quietly asked, "Can I speak to Evely." Ron retorted, "Sure, but are you repressed?" In those days, I never had a quick response to anything, but it really didn't matter, because I was already attracted to quirky people who were inclined to be outrageous.

We soon got to know Ron in person. Richard was particularly grateful to Ron for frequently seeking him out in temple crowds where both drifted toward the margins. Richard enjoyed Ron's company. He was a rare male who could talk about something other than investments, VCRs, and computers (though he did talk about computers.) Richard loved talking about cars with Ron. Ron was always working on some "classic." Richard lived vicariously. He especially loved watching Ron's Morgan project unfold, and he appreciated the blue and white mustang as well. We often laughed as Ron explained that you ultimately saved money if you bought a car for \$400 or less, fixed it up, and constantly repaired it. (Fortunately, Richard understood that I didn't share this sense of adventure when it came to the vehicle that I drove every day.)

We were always eager to find out how Ron had gotten to temple on those pleasant occasions when he attended services. Had he driven, run, or ridden his bike? His attire also drew our attention. One of our favorite outfits was an immaculate navy sports coat over khaki shorts. Ron was a breath of fresh air for us in an environment that we often found stifling.

Beyond appreciating his antics, Ron proved himself to be a caring friend even before we had known him very long. Early in our marriage, Richard was hospitalized with a blood infection. Ron dropped by the room with flowers and stayed to chat for a few minutes. We didn't even know how Ron had found out that he was in the hospital.

Similarly, Ron helped me during the first traumatic year at CBB. I had just become pregnant, and the Education Committee was busy arguing over whether to rehire me. Ron pulled me aside one evening and told me, "Document everything. Put everything in writing in case you ever need it. Note when things happen and who said them." His advice was some of the most important professional advice that I ever received. Over the years, documenting challenging interactions has allowed me to gather my thoughts, as well as to protect myself and the institutions that I have served.

In retrospect, we realize that Ron probably had no idea about how much impact he had on each of us. We loved the way Ron adored Evely, and the freedom with which he shared his admiration whenever she spoke. He was a model of a successful professional who didn't relinquish his individuality. He was also a model of a person who managed to be a member of a family even when things weren't perfect. It is hard to express how important it is to a young couple to have glimpses of imperfect lives that still work.

It's been sad for us to know that Ron has been in pain for so many years in the recent past. Still, we always enjoyed his warmth when we would see him. We also appreciated the energy and vitality that continued to bubble to the surface. We will both miss Ron, but want each of you to know how much we valued and enjoyed him while he was alive.