

**Memories of Ron  
Rich Appelbaum  
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Karen and I have been among Ron and Evely's closest friends since we first met at Dick and Mickey Flacks' home a quarter century ago. Our shared memories include travel together to England and Scotland, driving one of Ron's countless beat up old cars – a vintage VW bus – throughout the southwest, sailing to the channel islands on the *Black Sheep*, and – as recently as last May – vacationing together in Cabo San Lucas. Together we raised our families, shared countless confidences, and lit shabbos candles before feasting on Evely's homemade *challah*.

Thirty-five years of Ron's unique approach to life has provided us with a wealth of shared memories.

We will never forget running into the world-famous philosopher Jurgen Habermas on the windswept First Hopi Mesa, desperately trying to hide as Ron posed the one profound question that Germany's Hegel Prize winner had never before been forced to grapple with: "Professor Habermas, you are German, right? Do you know how to fix a Volkswagen engine?"

Nor will we ever forget driving back from Scotland, Ron in the back seat with Evely and Jill Levine, endlessly chanting "check it out, check it out, check it out" every time we passed anything of minor interest – actually, of no interest – to the point where to this day the refrain sometimes seizes my mind at inopportune moments and won't let go.

Or how about a garage full of "neck leashes," plastic dog tethers that coiled up tightly when not in use, but unfortunately could be bitten in half in a second by any dog so inclined – one of Ron's many inventions that never quite made it to the patent office. Or the famed "Refrigodunk," conceived on our sailing trip – the basic idea being to refrigerate food and beer by dragging them under the boat in a submersible refrigerator?

The Refrigodunk, by the way, could be easily cleaned by Ron's all-purpose "Schmutz-away," which would also pick up any stains left by spilled "recaf," a substance that could be secretly added to decaf coffee when you craved a jolt but didn't want your health fanatic friends to know you were still addicted to caffeine.

Or what about the time that Ron showed up at Woody's, where the ribs are drenched in barbeque sauce, deliberately attired for the occasion in an immaculate, starched white hospital gown?

This is a small sampling of Ron the jokester, forever making light of everything, always trying to turn serious conversations in absurd directions. Yet there was another side to Ron, one that for reasons known only to him was more often than not concealed: Ron could be incredibly insightful, serious, and caring. When we came to him for counsel on

personal matters, his advice was as good as it gets. He would give selflessly to his friends – all they had to do was ask.

Our daughter Lisa, emailing from Paris when she heard the news of Ron's death, spoke for our family when she wrote: "I'm so sad. I loved Ron. It's such awful news...I keep thinking about him and how long we've known him. He was such a character and had such a spirit."

Ron was indeed a character, and he had spirit. His eccentric playfulness – his deliberate lightness of being – might have occasionally driven us crazy, but it was all part of a package we loved, now experienced as a terrible emptiness.

In the past few years, that lightness of being – to paraphrase one of Evely's favorite writers – became nearly unbearable for Ron. If on the surface he remained the light-hearted jokester, his spirit was heavy. He became withdrawn, reclusive, increasingly isolated even from his close friends. I want to believe that Ron's troubled spirit has finally become unburdened, and that he has at last found peace.

We love you Ron, and we miss you. We miss your zany humor, your wise advice when we needed it, your long-lasting friendship. Yet somewhere in the vast cosmos, we are reasonably certain, you already have the heavenly host repeating "check it out, check it out, check it out," while you sell them on the virtues of neck leashes, refrigodunks, recaf, and eating barbequed spare ribs in white angelic gowns.