



Ralph Roger Meyer

February 18, 1940 - March 5, 2025

Ralph Roger Meyer, age 85, passed away on Wednesday, March 5, in Cincinnati, OH. Born February 18, 1940, in Milwaukee, WI, he was the first son of Geneva L. Schmidt and Ralph G. Meyer.

Ralph was a scientist, a professor -- and my beloved husband. A lover of the arts, music, art, and dance all touched his heart. But most of all, he cared about people. So important, more so every day in these times, Ralph was a man who reflexively addressed with action the issues that affected the people in his care.

Ralph believed deeply in women's rights. He stood up for equality. When a faculty search committee had included not one female candidate for the open position they were called upon to fill, he spoke out – and ultimately a woman was chosen. He adamantly supported women's control over their own bodies.

Not only an advocate for women, Ralph was a shepherd and a guide for his students. He was committed to helping them learn, and, to that end, supplied many innovative learning aids and study sessions. He taught teamwork, identifying it as a necessity for scientists – and indeed caught some flack from his colleagues when he gave a final exam that was completed by small teams of students who met with him to discuss their thinking about the problem that he had posed. When a student could not afford a textbook, he found a way.

Where there were barriers, he helped. He served on the Student Grievance Committee and was a strong advocate for fairness. Ralph received recognition and awards for his teaching (more about that below). He often stated that teaching was his passion.

Both a humanist and a scientist, it was simply obvious to Ralph that sexuality and gender identity exist on a biological continuum. He was disgusted by the hatred that now goes under the euphemism of “culture wars.” He actively supported people suffering from HIV/AIDS, lecturing as a volunteer and developing a unique multidisciplinary course that provided not only information, but developed empathy and understanding in his students, and for some, provided the experience of being welcomed and understood, perhaps for the first time.

Quietly understated, Ralph expressed himself in deeds more than in words. He took care of people. It showed in every aspect of his life. He loved and was loved, and he will be sorely missed.

What follows is a beautiful synopsis, written by Ralph’s daughter Jocelyn, of her father’s life and career – and a little more about who he was as a person.

Ralph studiously put himself through graduate school, earning his Ph.D. in Zoology from the University of Wisconsin–Madison in 1966 and going on to further the field of molecular genetics through his research on mitochondrial DNA and, later, serving as an expert court witness in safeguarding scientific access to Taq DNA polymerase from commercial privatization, the echoes of which are still felt globally with current PCR testing technology. His postdoctoral appointments included Yale University and SUNY–Stony Brook; his sabbatical research was performed at the renowned Université de Paris VII and later Stanford University. In 1969, he joined the University of Cincinnati’s Department of Biological Sciences where he later received tenure,

spending his career in research and teaching and earning the A.B. “Dolly” Cohen Award for Excellence in Teaching in 1997 as well as being promoted to University Distinguished Professor by the UC Board of Directors in 2001, a prestigious accolade.

Ralph was a modern Renaissance man, simultaneously earning a bachelor’s degree in French from the University of Cincinnati while he taught for the biology department; he subsequently became an Adjunct Professor of French for UC from 1994–2007, and never one to sit idle, he also taught as a visiting scholar at Purdue University from 2003–2007.

Ralph tirelessly championed causes including women’s rights, biotechnology and ethics, as well as AIDS education and awareness, an issue he was extremely devoted to, serving as a volunteer for AVOC and developing new curriculum such as “AIDS: Biomedical, Social, and Ethical Issues,” which quickly became a popular waitlisted course.

Ralph enjoyed teaching, skiing, family summer vacations in Wisconsin’s North Woods, fishing, Cincinnati Symphony concerts, French, butter pecan ice cream, puns (the agony of the feet!) and other dad jokes (you’re SO-sophisticated), and music, music, music—there was rarely a moment in his life that wasn’t underscored by music, from Tchaikovsky’s Swan Lake to Mozart’s Requiem to Sade’s “Smooth Operator.” Ralph discovered a love of dancing, participating in showcases at Dare to Dance and earning him the nickname “Rumba Ralph.”

Ralph was preceded in death by his brother Bill. He is survived by his wife Fran Hendrick; children Christine (Joe) Bohte, Gregory, Lauren (Joe) Meyer-Herr, and Jocelyn (Brian); grandchildren Corine (Neal) Meyer Freund, Bradley (Janet), Stephanie (Nick) Blazei, Zak Bohte, and Brian Petranec; six

great-grandchildren; and brother Tom. A celebration of life will take place later this summer.

In lieu of flowers, memorial contributions to Caracole, Cincinnati Symphony, Ensemble Theatre Cincinnati, the Free Store, or Logan's Heart and Smiles (Wisconsin) would be greatly appreciated.

Tribute Wall

DR

“ I didn't know Ralph but he sounds like an incredible human. My condolences to you and your family.

Doris Marks Rodier - March 13, 2025 at 09:14 AM

SH

“ I never knew Ralph. But after reading his Obit, I felt like I knew him. One thing for sure, in my youth if I would have had him as a teacher. I could have checked off a different box. Congrats to your students. A life well lived.

Stuart Hodesh

Stuart Hodesh - March 11, 2025 at 10:21 PM