

Memorial for Richard S. Newrock

Richard Newrock was born in Brooklyn in 1942 and grew up on Long Island. He was an undergraduate at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute and received his Ph.D. in physics from Rutgers University in 1970. After a post-doctoral stint at Cornell, Rick came to the University of Cincinnati in 1974. Over the course of a nearly forty-year career at UC, Rick published numerous scientific papers and was elected a Fellow of the American Physical Society. He served as Department Head for 13 years during which time he oversaw the construction of the current Geology-Physics building. He was Dean of the College of Applied Science from 2002 until 2009. Under his leadership the college thrived and grew both in stature and enrollment. Rick was one of the driving forces for the creation of a four-year degree in culinary studies at the College of Applied Science. This enabled Rick to spend a week in Paris touring culinary schools.

In 2009 he returned to the physics department where he resumed teaching and research until his death.

Rick was a man with diverse interests and skills. As a college student he built decks to earn money, he was an expert electronics designer and late in life learned cabinet making. He could fix almost anything, a trait that served him well when he and his roommates decided to see what would happen if you set off a cherry bomb in the bottom of a cast iron bathtub. Lesser men would have forfeited the security deposit but Rick was able to patch the bathtub with fiberglass. If the landlord noticed he did not say anything and he returned the security deposit.

One of Rick's defining traits was his intellectual curiosity and the rigorous intellectual scrutiny he gave everything and everybody. It was often said that Rick did not suffer fools lightly but in truth he did not suffer fools period.

In 1952 he was, as he put it, "unceremonially dumped into a scout troop", a Cub Scout troop. This proved to be a life changing experience although not in the way the scouts intended. He was immediately taught by the scout leader that as a scout he must "do what you're told when you're told". This confused him as his father had been teaching him to question everything and everyone. As we all know his father's teachings took hold. During the summer of his thirteenth year he was sent to Boy Scout camp. His chief memory of the camp, aside from not enjoying the activities, was that he became extremely ill. The camp officials told him to "suck it up and ignore minor problems". He had a strep infection, developed nephritis, and spent eight months in bed. The boy scouts got him sick enough to discover that he could learn on his own. A lesson that served him well and that he never forgot.

Although he hated the Boy Scouts, Rick was a passionate outdoorsman. In his younger years he was an avid hiker, backpacker, paddler and climber. He took up fly-fishing in his later years. He was especially fond of the Tetons, the Wind Rivers and Jackson Hole and built a house in Idaho just across the pass from Jackson Hole where he spent many a happy day.

Rick joined the literary club in 1991 and gave seven papers. The first "**Richard Burton I'M Not**" tells the story of his first trip to Vietnam, a country he grew to love and to which he returned many times despite having worked hard in his youth to avoid Southeast Asia. The rest of Rick's papers dealt with science, pseudoscience and the difficulty people have distinguishing between them. Rick's last paper **Bozo Sapiens** is a tour de force of the many hoaxes that demonstrate how gullible and trusting really smart people can be. He sites magicians and card sharks who swear that their best audience would be a group of Nobel Laureates. There was sustained laughter when Rick went through a litany of hoaxes from the BBC and Discover Magazine. The BBC video story of the extinction of the dreaded "Pasta Weevil" with shots of Swiss farmers harvesting spaghetti from trees is hilarious. Read both papers for some real belly laughs.

Many of you were unaware of how many serious medical issues Rick had over the last few years and that's because he handled them with aplomb and the philosophy of "you play the cards you're dealt". He was not a physician but he understood medical science and the art of medicine more than most doctors, and he kept bouncing back. We'll miss him.

Respectfully submitted,

Richard Gass
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