

Ethica

The Newsletter of the Communication Ethics Division

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Special Edition

Message from Guest Editors

Michelle A. Leavitt, William Jessup University, Bay Area Campus

Spoma Jovanovic, University of North Carolina, Greensboro

Bert Ballard, Pepperdine University

Thank you to everyone who contributed to this special edition of *Ethica* as we remember the life and legacy of Dr. Roy V. Wood. The articles, reflections, and poems honor Roy as dean, professor, author, mentor, and friend. This is a heartfelt and thoughtful tribute to someone whose life and love ultimately exceeded the boundaries of words, roles, and titles.

We are deeply grateful to all who shared their memories of Roy – a rare individual who sought to bring out the best in us and taught us to do the same.

OBITUARY

Roy V. Wood
September 18, 1939 – October 1, 2019

Roy Vaughn Wood, Ph.D., died peacefully in his sleep on the morning of October 1st, 2019 in Denver, Colorado. Roy was a gifted college administrator and professor specializing in the philosophy of communication, communication ethics and qualitative research methods. From both a professional and a personal standpoint, he strove to fulfill the mandate implied by Emmanuel Levinas, that “through the eyes of the other the whole of humanity looks at me.”

Roy was born in Salida, Colorado on September 18, 1939 to D. Maynard and Allene S Wood. He graduated from Colorado Springs High School where he became involved in their debate team. His debate coach took the team to a steak dinner at the Brown Palace Hotel in Denver and, through that experience, Roy began to envision a life beyond the limits of a small, working class environment. Roy later coached debate and, in 1968, wrote the seminal debate textbook *Strategic Debate* (now in its 6th edition and still widely used). Roy’s father was a proud member of the Communications Workers of America union and instilled in him the importance of fair treatment and the need to fight for the rights of the common man.

Roy Wood completed his B.A., M.A., and Ph.D. in Communication Studies at the University of Denver by 1965 and was soon hired by Northwestern University in Evanston, Illinois and became Dean of the School of Communication (then known as the School of Speech) in 1972. Becoming the youngest Dean in NU history, at the age of 32, he played an active role in negotiations between student protesters and the administration during that turbulent period. During the 1970s and 80s, Dean Wood’s team raised millions of dollars and the school progressed into its 100th year with multiple state-of-the-art facilities and a world-renowned faculty. Roy’s legendary fundraising abilities for Northwestern University resulted in friendships with many NU alumni, including Garry Marshall, Bob Banner, Hal Wallis, Charlton Heston, and others. He was married to Mary Alice Tudor in 1960 and her assistance in forging bonds with trustees, donors, and faculty families was invaluable. Their daughters, Shelley and Angela Wood, were raised in the Chicago area.

In 1988, Roy began a new chapter as Provost of the University of Denver. Returning to Colorado and his alma mater was a source of deep satisfaction and he strove to contribute as much to DU as he felt it had afforded him. Serving as Chair of Human Communication Studies, but mainly as a revered Professor, his time at DU teaching and mentoring students brought him great joy. His pedagogical style and reading lists pushed students to achieve great things. If they were hardworking, they would have no greater advocate – but a motto “This Ain’t No Disco” (Talking Heads) also prevailed. He made it clear that he wasn’t at DU to punch tickets! He retired from teaching at the age of 75. Recent social media



Retirement Celebration, May 2015

posts and comments from a multitude of students, particularly those who were at a sociocultural disadvantage, attest to the impact he had on their intellectual and emotional growth.

As he reached the stage of Sage, Roy served on Colorado's Independent Ethics Commission (appointed by Andrew Romanoff) and the Denver Board of Ethics (2011-2019). His other academic and civic accomplishments are too numerous to detail here.

In recent years, Roy remained an active mentor to students and faculty while spending his days with wife Consuelo Bennett. They split time between Colorado and Stratford-upon-Avon in England. His playful and demonstrative side was fully in evidence when in the company of his grand and great-grandchildren. His home office featured tiny chairs and toys in case a young person happened by. Ethics, ontology, painting, attending productions at the Royal Shakespeare Company, poker, good food and associating with interesting people were some of his favorite pursuits. He also worked on projects for the homeless (Salvation Army, Colorado Coalition for the Homeless) and painted watercolors of panhandlers (he paid his subjects a \$100 bill to pose for a photo).

If Roy Wood had an overriding policy, it was that we must stand up for the underdog, the minority, the dispossessed, and the underestimated. To these, he offered the most generous quantities from his considerable wells of encouragement and energy. He did not seek happiness as a primary goal, but he found it in the eyes of an empowered student, friend, or family member. His faith and a deep spiritual connection was the well from which he drew strength and the ability to find love and peace surrounding those in his life.

Roy is survived by his beloved companion and wife, Consuelo Bennett, his daughters Angela and Shelley Wood, sister Shirley Lohse (and her family), and his step-daughters Alicia, Carolyn, Jennifer, Monica, Courtney and Meredith. His grandchildren include Eliot Wood, Elizabeth Parker, Willoughby DeLisle, along with, Luca, Elsa, and Nico Rodriguez and great-grandchildren River and Henry. To say he was loved would be a ridiculous understatement, for he was ADORED and TREASURED. All of us will miss the chats, encouragement, deep conversations, cups of coffee and all the restaurant meals.

A Celebration of Roy Wood's Life will be held on Saturday, November 2nd 2019 at 1:00 PM at Wellshire Presbyterian Church (2999 S. Colorado Blvd.) in Denver. In lieu of flowers, please consider remembering him with a gift to the Colorado Coalition for the Homeless at PO Box 1560 Denver, CO 80201 or (memo: Dean Roy Wood Scholarship) Northwestern University, Gift & Record Services, Development & Alumni Relations, 1201 Davis Street, Evanston, IL 60208.

Roy's Call

By Bert Ballard
Pepperdine University

It was actually an ethics class that my first academically published paper was written for. I don't recall the specific assignment details – something about working with lived experience and ethics in that vague but still very specific style Roy was known for. In response, I generated a list of ideas, even creating a filing system with some articles for each idea as I couldn't narrow down what I wanted to write about.

When I met with Roy to review my ideas, I started talking about all of the different thoughts running through my head. Roy sat there, eyes closed so he could concentrate, arms crossed, considering each one but offering no feedback one way or another. I finished with a passing comment, "There's also

my grandfather who passed away, and I wrote something like who is responsible for the other or something like that.” When I stopped, Roy pursed his lips and got that wistful look on his face that he does, and said something like, “Well, these are pretty good, but let’s go back to your grandfather.”

With that prompting, I rattled on for another five minutes about my grandfather and what he went through in the hospital and my parents and my family’s experience of it all. I wasn’t really into it; it felt more like a recitation of facts than anything meaningful. I think I was scared to be too vulnerable, feeling like that isn’t what “academic” writing is about. But Roy looked right at me after I was done, without hesitation and said, “Write about that! That is lived experience. That is your life. Write about that!”

So I did. I took two phrases jotted down on the back of some random piece of paper about the death of my grandfather and turned it into a paper for Roy’s class that was eventually published in *Qualitative Inquiry*.

On the day we were to present our papers in class, two big things happened. First, I was talking to a friend on my phone right before class started, and for some reason when I put my phone down but didn’t hang up, so my friend listened to my whole presentation. Second, my paper on the death of my grandfather (eventually published as “Granpa’s Call: Conscience, Ethics, and Aporias,” 2009) was so moving, Roy called for a break after I was done so people could collect themselves. During the break, I heard my friend sobbing on the other end of the phone, and I felt embarrassed that I never hung up, but he said to me, “That was the greatest thing I’ve ever heard.” And during the break, Roy pulled me aside and said, “I’ve never had to take a break after a student’s paper. That was ... wow. Good job.”

Fast forward to today, to every teaching moment, every bit of time spent planning, and every interaction with a student. Into each of those moments, I always carry with me that “write about that!” moment Roy gave me. Roy saw something I didn’t even see in myself. He saw inspiration. He saw authenticity. He saw an “A-ha!” moment. He told me to take advantage of that. It was just a moment, but a moment that has transformed me, my life, and my academic career. It is a moment that has stayed with me forever.

In those teaching moments, I try to inspire in my students what Roy inspired in me. When I sit with a student or hold a class discussion, I always hope for those “write about that!” moments when I can provide the kind of insight and influence Roy did for me, those moments where Levinas’ care and responsibility for the Other emerge in the teacher-student dynamic in ways Roy consistently modeled.

Roy didn’t stop when I finished graduate school. He was there to support me when I transitioned into my first faculty position. And he was there to remind me of who I am when that position didn’t turn out well. He always sought me out at least once a year, and he always loved my family as though they were his own.

I helped coordinate a national “Teachers on Teaching” recognition for Roy in 2014 to honor how he has inspired and influenced so many. It was a small way to give back. Many former students and colleagues offered statements and letters of support. And in true Roy fashion, when he presented on that panel, he offered advice on the call of teaching – not for money or accolades, but for the belief that others matter and investing in them means investing in a better world around us.

Roy retired in 2015. Roy loved haikus. At the time, I wrote three in his honor. I share them here again.

#1

Inspiring he is
Roy Wood teacher and mentor
Levinasian

#2

Granpa's Call on us
A moment that defined us
Will never forget

#3

Teacher, mentor, friend
Inspiration for my own
Gratitude for Roy

I miss you, Roy. I always will. Go frolic.

Love, Bert

P.S. – Because of health and schedules, the last time we had dinner together was in 2018, at a seaside restaurant in Malibu (“Pick a restaurant, Bert! It has to have an ocean view!”). In the photo are Roy and his wonderful wife, Consuelo, and me and with my wonderful wife, Sarah.



Sarah Ballard, Bert Ballard, Roy Wood, and
Consuelo Bennett, Malibu, 2018

Roy V. Wood: A Strategist of Ethical Commitment

By Ken Chase
Wheaton College (IL)

Glancing at my desk one recent afternoon, a colleague saw the first edition of *Strategic Debate*, Roy’s influential textbook. “Ah!” he gasped, startled to see a beloved book from nearly forty years ago. “That was my constant companion during my early debate years. Invaluable!” Indeed, I had pulled the copy from the shelf because I, too, remain grateful for Roy’s trustworthy guide to competitive debating during my high school years. News of Roy’s death was deeply saddening; I would miss in ways hard to express a friend and wise elder statesman of NCA and the Communication Ethics Division. But thoughts immediately rushed to his early formative influence on my life as author of that invaluable resource. His book, published when he was only twenty-nine years old, impresses now as it did then: a model of articulate pedagogy featuring clear prose, crisp analytical distinctions, and a teacher’s heart. Although I had strong high school debate coaches, it was Roy’s book that grounded my intellectual fascination with debate, proving that persuasive strategy is occasion for careful thought and disciplined communication. Roy’s book nurtured generations of debaters. Yet, long after the strategies of a comparative advantage case, or the tactics of effective cross examination, have ceased to inform our daily lives, a simple glance at the book now still prompts exclamations of intellectual delight. We remember the book as we remember a faithful friend. Back in the early 70’s we didn’t know the author and were too green academically to appreciate the skill and hard work it takes to write such a masterful text. We did know, though, that the author cared—about our education, our competitive activity, our success, and our lives. Roy wrote as a mentor, invested in nurturing the educational spaces for intellectual inquiry, learned deliberation, disagreement, and personal fulfillment.

When I was much older, about mid-level in my academic career and having more than a decade of active NCA attendance behind me, I had opportunity to participate in a convention seminar co-led by notable scholars Michael Hyde, Ron Arnett, and Roy Wood. Although acquainted with Michael and Ron, I had not yet met Roy. Through this day-long session on the work of Emmanuel Levinas, I learned first-hand that the wise tutor of *Strategic Debate* lived up to my expectations as a personable and committed educator. Although that initial seminar—the start of what would become the “Levinas reading group”—was admirably led by all three co-conveners, it was Roy who seemed most keen on advancing our ongoing scholarship through subsequent panels and seminars. Furthermore, he was pivotal in linking us with the Communication Ethics Division, which benefited directly from Roy’s ability to channel our intellectual interests into divisional membership and organizational leadership. For Roy, scholarship goes hand-in-hand with a commitment to producing vital organizational structures that, in turn, nurture further inquiry.

Like so many others during Roy’s career, I directly benefited from his affirming and pointed appeals to get involved and commit to the betterment of our shared work. As Roy’s formal obituary notes, and as many of my fellow Comm Ethics scholars rightly explain, Roy’s affinity for Emmanuel Levinas’ ethics as “first philosophy” translated directly into his demonstrated respect and concern for each of us. He cared for me, and through multiple gestures of professional and personal regard, he identified ways I could develop as scholar and volunteer. And I certainly affirm Roy’s Levinasian-inspired ethic as motivating his remarkable gift for listening wisely and justly. For me, though, Roy’s ethic of communication also is strikingly evident in the earliest pages of *Strategic Debate*. Roy taught me, and generations of young debaters, that debate is a holistic practice of regarding others. Eschewing the reduction of debate to a mere competitive outlet, Roy linked vigorous competition with a higher educational value: “The techniques needed to win a debate embody the very skills and attitudes that are identical with the educational values of debating” (3). What are these values? The qualities of democratic participation in which students gain “an appreciation for the case that is well developed, no matter which side it represents” (2). Roy wanted students to grow as persons, to become citizens capable of respecting the other’s voice, regardless of personal biases or convictions. We are formed as persons, Roy reasons, when the competitive activity—the very structures of an organized institutional program—is taken seriously not for the possible accolades of victory but for its promise of individual and civic enrichment.

As I experienced directly through his seminar leadership, and see articulated clearly in his earliest writing, Roy was a gifted mentor and educator who saw the ethical potential of linking persons with organizations. Roy lived his early ideal that debate structures and educational value go hand-in-hand by coaxing us to embrace the shared places for personal and collective growth. We ought to seek the larger and more important interests in whatever competition we pursue. As he had written, “Competitive success, then, should not be a means for gratifying the ego of the coach or the debater or for building the reputation of a school; it should be one of the measures of how much the student is learning about debate” (3). Roy has taught us well the contours of those ethical judgments crucial for humane and purposeful living. I count myself blessed to have experienced that teaching first-hand, and would be grateful if I, in turn, could teach my friends, students, and colleagues half as well.

10 Lessons that I try to turn to regularly, which I learned from Roy, drawn from memories of our 15-year friendship

By Christina Foust

Metropolitan State University of Denver

1. Compliment and encourage more often. Say I love you to your friends.
2. Share your observations to help ease others' worries (meta-communicate).
3. Academics--share your intellectual preoccupations. Share "elevator lectures" with people who will listen. These things matter, and by gum, you're a walking library.
4. Try not to get consumed by the to do list. Go frolic ☺
5. Be a mental risk-taker. Never stop learning something new. Keep active with a project that matters to you.
6. Serve others, not your ego. Avoid bureaucracy, but follow important rules (ethics) that maintain others' dignity.
7. Interruptions--they happen, you can't prepare for them, you don't know how they will end, but you'll grow from them.
8. Try not to suffer fools. If it's all about the ego for another, let them go.
9. Acknowledgement matters. Acknowledge.
10. Make regular time to be with others, preferably face to face. Eat good food, enjoy company, dance, and laugh freely.

After You

By Christina Foust

Metropolitan State University of Denver

Our time
Was a saying
That is now said.

"Sit, sit, this time is precious,"
you say.
Our time fills
With story,
 theory,
Our precious ethics,
 time fills art,
As it has with laughter.
 for years. gifts,
 hugs,
 love.

Our time
Was a saying
That is now said.

“Hope to see you often,”
you say.
Our often was a rhythm
Easy for me to step into.
When other rhythms have tripped me.
How do I clear time for deep connection
with people I love,
who support me,
make me laugh,
inspire me,
counsel me?

“You and I are going to have
some pathos to work through,” you had written.
I think you knew.
But the pathos was always with us.
An atmosphere we breathed.
The saying alive within it.

“I love you,” you say.
I awkwardly step closer to you
A hug over the tubing, our hands
Hold shoulders for a bit longer.
“I love you,” I say.

The last words between us,
oxygenating.
A gift,
a giving.
The little things mattered so.
They still do.
“Ethics is the après vous.”
After you, dear friend.
After you.

For Roy

By Pat Gehrke
University of South Carolina

Roy and I first met at an NCA preconference in 1999. A dozen or so of us gathered on a cold Chicago morning in November to read Emmanuel Levinas's work and talk together. Some people in the group were already established scholars in the discipline, some were new assistant professors, and some were mid-career. Many of us, like myself, were graduate students. I don't think I knew anyone in the room when we met that first time. The conversation was exciting, invigorating, challenging, and even tense at times. Some spoke only a little; some spoke a great deal. I spoke far too much, with the bluster of an overeager student hungry for a community.

In the midst of it all, Roy's voice was always tying us back together, connecting our disparate views, mediating our disputes, and asking searching questions. He was not there to advance his own research agenda or career. He was not there to push his interpretation of the work. He was there to open a space for others. At the time, I am sure I underestimated the work he was doing and its importance.

We met formally like this at NCA for five years. While some came and went, a core group of us returned every year. We began organizing panels together, then dinners and special events. Even after our annual Levinas reading group ended, for many years Roy would find some way to bring us back together. We always met up at NCA, almost always thanks to Roy. Time and again, he found a time, a place, and a reason for us to come together. He built a community of scholars, teachers, and good people. I do not know who did the paperwork for our preconferences or who scoured the halls to find us an empty room when we were meeting off the books. But I do know that it was Roy who kept our community alive.

Over time that community took on a life of its own, sometimes moving out into smaller clusters or to form new communities, sometimes coming back together. Collaborations formed, work was shared, events were organized, and Roy gently let go as others took on the often invisible work of building and maintaining the community he created.

Roy indelibly changed our lives by creating enduring relationships and facilitating countless opportunities to better know each other and ourselves. I cannot begin to estimate how much of my own work was transformed by the community and conversations that Roy made possible. I see the echoes of Roy's voice and that community in so many of my colleagues' work: certainly, of course, in Roy's own students like Spoma Jovanovic, Chris Poulos, and so many more, but also in the work of Lisbeth Lipari, Ron Arnett, Michael Hyde, and others. How many of us found a pathway not only through Levinas but through the tangles of our own thinking thanks to Roy's searching questions? Roy's scholarly contribution can be found not only on his own curriculum vitae but in the work of people across the country, from diverse backgrounds, at every rank.

Roy leaves a legacy of relationships and communities that has lifted all of us up. I am certain that the scant time Roy and I spent together, and his dedication to building this community, were only a small reflection of the larger way he lived his life. It would not surprise me to learn that the gift of community that he gave to our Levinas reading group was a gift he was giving again and again, across all his roles and relationships. Though we knew each other only a little, and saw each other only once or twice a year, time and again Roy extended this gift to me. It was a gift he extended without expectation or debt, given to someone he barely knew, and given repeatedly. What can I possibly say to mark his passing? No words are enough, so I will say simply this: thank you, Roy.

A Reflection

By Brian Grewe
University of Denver

I have started to write this time and time again. Sometimes I would have pages of feelings and I would delete them, the act of watching the cursor move backwards over the words being cathartic as if I could erase the pain that I am feeling as I think about you not being here. Click clack. Click clack. The keys retype words, ideas, phrases that remind me of the time we spent together in class and over meals. I think about the very first time we met, and I think about our last meeting together. I realize that as I write, and rewrite, and retype and reflect that no matter what I put forth, I will never actually be satisfied with what's there – as I am not satisfied with how quickly you left us.

It's been about six months now and I still think about you often. I connect with other former students, colleagues, friends and enemies and while we share memories of you or our times with you, I think about the fact that we will never again live in a world where your voice, your heart and your wisdom will be shared directly by you. In essence, your passing has created an interruption and the world is now marked by the impact that you've made.

The concept of the interruption is centered in the idea that ethics is first philosophy. I remember the lesson in which we first talked about this idea. We weren't even talking about Levinas that day, we had *Toward a Philosophy of the Act*, a book from the pre-dialogic turn of Bakhtin and in our conversation, you stated, "Ethics is first philosophy." We spent the better part of an hour talking about the primordial responsibility that exists between us and others. I remember the confusion that I and others in the class experienced as you were not necessarily talking about literal people, but more accurately the idea of people, of all people.

The interruption marks a moment in which our minds become troubled. It manifests in a rhetorical sense as it allows language to become troubled and creates a space for communication to occur. This discursive divergence leads to the availability of new space and new ideas, and for us to be able to interrogate alterity. I relate this idea to the similarity of managing dialectical tensions; balancing the desire to understand phenomenon and the vastness of experiencing otherness within the Other. I think of the life events that we as human beings have, some marked by societal expectations (i.e., graduations, new schools, jobs and new relationships) and others that simply occur as life progresses (i.e., births, health traumas, and deaths). For the former, we experience the interruption as a marker in life that shifts our directional course but allows us to continue our relationships within life. The former however marks a moment in which our lives are irrevocably changed, and a new version of us is forced to exist and make sense of the world.

You were present for some of these moments in my life. When I met you, I was a 26-year-old kid on bed rest. I wasn't able to come to campus and even before we were to meet as a department, you visited my home. I expected a formal meeting where you were going to talk about the department and expectations, but instead we talked about life. From the moment you entered my home, you were kind and thoughtful and you showed interest in who we [my wife and I] were as people. You shared your passions for watercolor painting, playing poker and eating good food. You showed genuine compassion and empathy as I sat attached to a machine, uncertain on how long my recovery was going to be. When I chose to try and do classes online, you provided me with options and when I took a year to situate my life, you were supportive. You put in perspective the experience of becoming a father to not just one, but two sets of twins. These formative interruptions were punctuated by your guidance, hospitality and support.

But now I am faced with another interruption, this one being a big one – and this time you are not here, not physically at least. I don't know how to understand this experience and the otherness this time feels vaster and more infinite than anything that I've ever experienced. On October 1, 2019 you passed away.

I was sitting in my office. It was your office actually. At least it was your office when you were still on campus. I was assigned it just two months earlier and I remember walking in and seeing your labels, still stuck on the stark white shelves – “Levinas” and “Comm Ethics” stared back at me and I smiled. I texted you a picture of the office with the phrase, “I have big shoes to fill.” The news hit like a freight train, the wind rushing out of me as the words spun by like cars on a track. If I could stand, I would have fallen over. I had just seen you two days prior, we talked about stockings and poker, you shared a picture of Kansas that you painted for our friend's daughter and you promised to draw a self-portrait, even though you hated the idea. You looked healthy and you felt good.

So as I sit here in bed, thinking about the experiences we shared and what your presence has meant to me, I am torn. I am sad that you will no longer be able to share your life with me. I will no longer get updates on your globetrotting adventures, Vegas poker room stories or just advice on why none of the bureaucracy matters. I will not be able to share the going-ons of my life, the stories about my kids or any of my own adventures. But I do get to say that I knew and cared for you. I get to share stories about you and connect with others who also enjoyed your kindness, hospitality and good humor. In the end, your passing serves as an interruption to many of us, and while you are not physically with us any longer, your teaching, mentorship and friendship will linger on through the rest of our lives.

Go frolic Roy, speed towards the infinite and I hope our paths will cross again.

A Reflection

By Michael J. Hyde
Wake Forest University

There is a saying that comes to mind when trying to express in a most fitting way one's thoughts and feelings about the passing away of a dear mentor, colleague, and friend: “There are no words, but there are only words.” And thus my situation of dealing with the absence of Roy's invaluable presence. Two days before he left us he sent me an email with an attached article from the *New York Times* and asked for my opinion of its worth. I thought all was well. My schedule at the time was quite full, so I noted in my calendar that I would respond in three days. It wasn't fair: my delaying, his departing. Roy and I spent a lot of time together at conferences talking about the all-important ethic of being for others. Indeed, “Where art thou? Here I am!” I am trying to respond now. There are no words, but there are only words. Thus, let us remain grateful for the leadership, wisdom, and goodness of Dr. Roy V. Wood. A hero, to be sure.

I am With You...Roy Wood's Legacy

By Spoma Jovanovic

University of North Carolina, Greensboro

At the turn of the century, Roy and I were collaborating on several writing projects prompted by the work of Emmanuel Levinas. In *Speaking at the Bedrock of Ethics*, published in response to 9/11, we wrote about Harry Ramos who extended a hand to another in a gesture that gave new meaning to life even when Harry's body, and that of another, perished that day. Harry's beautiful act of selflessness and compassion was one of many that emerged spontaneously to show us that, "The trace is palpable yet not tangible, within our reach yet out of our grasp" in referring to Levinas' idea of ethics. Roy and I concluded that article recognizing that courage, faith, and regard for the other are expressed perhaps most clearly in the words of Harry, "I am with you."

Now, nearly two decades later, I find comfort in Harry's words to describe my friend, teacher, co-author, and hero, Roy Wood. His trace remains in the way we view communication, in how I write, in the ways his former students now teach, and most importantly, he would surely concur, in the ways we invite others to see, say, and stand for what matters most in their lives. Roy's trace is active in my memories of him as a great teacher who was a co-conspirator (and no doubt he is smiling at that word choice!) in the quest to illuminate the home of communication studies in ethics. Toward that end, he was happy to follow the lead of others, and also take the lead *with* others in organizing convenings all over the country. As the years passed, a circle of friends studying Levinas that began with Michael, Chris, Lisbeth, Ron, Luanne, Ken, Jeff, Pat, me and others, expanded so that our weekly readings, annual gatherings, and special conferences included new faces alongside the old. Roy's trace glides in and through the scholarly and community work we did then and continue to advance now.



Spoma Jovanovic and Roy Wood
June 2001

Roy modeled for us how living as an academic opens up possibilities to live life fully. We learned from him to deepen our sense of adventure in finding and reading new books, to struggle with others over coffee and conversation, and to question why this and not that. Throughout, we were offered Roy's laughter *and* his silence that served to push our thinking to new depths. We witnessed and felt his joy and love of seeing the best in people.

When Roy and I authored *Speaking at the Bedrock of Ethics*, I did not know then that our words crafted over time and distance, were prophetic. We wrote, "The trace we leave behind when we are gone from sight or from life on earth is something not to miss but instead to cherish as a model of human decency." At the time we wrote that, the sentence reflected a truism made clear to us in the aftermath of 9/11. Now, the sentence takes my breath away as it reveals the impact of Roy Wood on my life. Roy's trace, *his* declaration and his legacy, always was and still is, "I am with you."

Memories of a Mentor

By Michelle A. Leavitt

William Jessup University, Bay Area Campus

It seems like just yesterday Dr. Roy Wood welcomed us to our first doctoral seminar at the University of Denver with his gentle smile, humble laugh, and call to responsibility. We gathered around a well-worn conference table in the basement of Stern Hall on a warm August day. In the first few minutes of “Philosophies of Dialogue,” Roy put us at ease by saying: “you’ve already impressed me—you are in the program. You don’t need to try to impress me, but if you read, listen, and contribute, we may experience dialogue.” On the last day of class, we recalled dialogic moments that emerged over the term—where we set aside our bias, listened with openness, and learned from each other. Roy invited us into a space where dialogue could emerge as a result of his welcome and care for the other.

Throughout my program at the University of Denver, I remember how Roy invested time in his students inside and outside of the classroom. Early in my time in the graduate program, he proposed we start a reading group as he had done in previous years. He generously shared his time, expertise, and some hot tea, creating a place where students were welcome to ask questions and wrestle with philosophical concepts.

Roy’s commitment continued as he chaired my dissertation committee, challenged me to begin writing for publication, and continued mentoring at academic conferences. Mentoring seemed to come naturally as he encouraged those around him to submit to the Communication Ethics Division, serve the division like he did, and make it one of our academic homes. Through his openness, commitment, and care, he invested in mentoring relationships for the other.

By welcoming students, building mentoring relationships, and inviting us to participate in NCA’s annual convention—

Roy was a consummate teacher and mentor. I am grateful for my time with him and for how he shared his passion for teaching, dedication to students, and commitment to mentoring those around him. Thank you, Roy, for welcoming me not only to the University of Denver, but to the Communication Ethics Division. I am grateful for your invitation to listen, contribute, and be open to dialogue—an invitation that will continue long into the future.



**Communication Ethics Conference
Snow Mountain Ranch**

Spoma Jovanovic, Bert Ballard, Michelle Leavitt,
Chris Poulos, and Donna Goben with Roy Wood

Memories of Roy V. Wood

By Christopher N. Poulos
University of North Carolina, Greensboro

I entered the Ph.D. program at the University of Denver in the fall of 1995. There I met the man who would be my mentor, Roy V Wood. When I heard of his passing this past fall, it took my breath away.

Some people just aren't supposed to die.

October 1, 2019

Today is my 61st birthday. To celebrate, I decide I want to go to a kids' movie—a very un-scholarly thing to do on my short fall sabbatical. I need some relief, and maybe some laughter. There's been a lot of loss, a lot of grief, in my life lately. So we go to the Red Cinema to see the DreamWorks animated film, *Abominable*. It is everything you'd expect: Silly, packed with action, with a standard hero's journey plot line. And, best of all, a Yeti. I feel joy coursing through my veins as I let go and just fall into the movie.

On our way out of the theater, a message pops up: Roy Wood died today.

So Roy, my mentor, died on my birthday.

Poetry?

As I get the news that October afternoon, I find myself reeling. I stumble into a coffee shop with my beloved wife Susan, and try to come to grips with this loss. His death, to me, is particularly stunning, coming as it does just a few short weeks after my other hero—my dad—died in July.

And now, I think of them both—my biological father, and my academic father—every day, and I can't help but think of how much the ground has shifted under my feet, now that they've departed this world. Life will not be the same without these two men in it. Without my many memories of encounters with these men, my soul would be smaller, to be sure.

As my tears flow, I am flooded with memories. My journey with Roy began with all the classes he taught in DU's doctoral program in the mid-to-late 1990s—Organizational Communication, Philosophy of Communication, Qualitative Research Methods ...to put it mildly, after just a few short moments in that first class, I quickly realized I had found my mentor.

As a teacher and a person, Roy had a *presence* that left an indelible mark on me. Years after I met him, I wrote this about Roy: "The teacher, I think, is a shaman." He was a liminal servant, a dweller of thresholds, whose mission was ushering us into new worlds of mystery and insight, showing us the possibilities in ideas, and in ourselves. As I said, I took all the classes I could take from him. In Qualitative Research Methods, we did field ethnography, and when someone asked him a question, he often responded, "It depends."

I always liked "It depends."

He had a way of helping you search...for meaning, for nuance, for texture in what you were experiencing as an ethnographer.

And, at the end of every class, he always said the same thing: "OK. Go frolic!"

I love the life and the lightness and the joy in that!

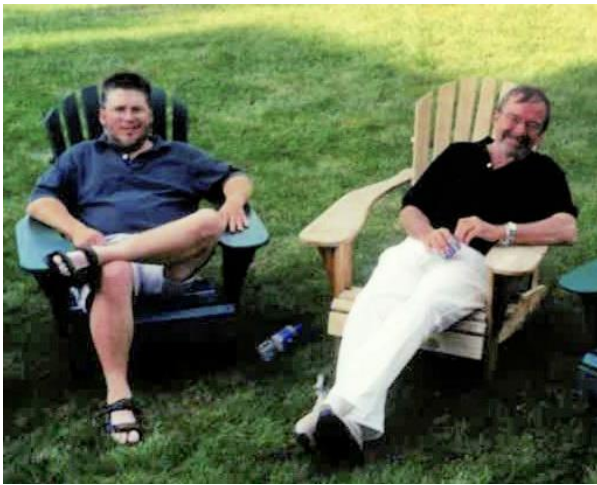
One day, as I began my directed dissertation research, I approached him with the idea of doing an independent study. We settled on reading *Totality and Infinity*, by Emmanuel Levinas. Little did we know what we'd started...

We began meeting weekly at his house, and talking about what we were reading. Of course, it was complex stuff. Perhaps we needed more voices in the conversation? In typical Roy fashion

(shaman!) this “independent study” somehow morphed into a weekly reading GROUP. Spoma Jovanovic was there! We read Levinas, drank coffee, ate scones...all outside the usual boundaries of courses and official university terrain.

This group later moved to Stella's Coffee House in Washington Park. We met weekly at 7 a.m. and read *Otherwise than Being*. Roy was always the connector, the glue who held us together. Through it all, his hospitality and presence and humanity and humility gently shone from him, shedding light on our path, and kept us from wandering off into too many tangents. This was some seriously important work! It was magical. Shaman indeed.

Levinas, you see, writes of the demand—an invocation, really, a *saying*—that puts us always deep in ethical relation, a relation that issues directly from the face of the human Other. Levinas sees this encounter with the Other as the ignition of a Holy, limitless light that calls out into the open, that lays us bare, that burns in us and beyond us, that opens up possibility. And there he was, our teacher, Roy, leading us into the light.



Chris Poulos and Roy Wood, June 2001

Along the way, this mentor-friend guided me through the tricky terrain of writing a rather unconventional dissertation (OK, a weird, wildly unconventional one). Doing that was kind of like rappelling off a cliff. Roy helped me set everything up, and he belayed me as I took the plunge. He gave me just enough rope...and I slipped but never fell...yeah, he was definitely a shaman.

I know it sounds like a cliché’ (because it is one), but I always considered Roy to be my academic father. He introduced me to the various complexities of this quirky terrain we call academia, and he supported me and my career throughout the rest of his life. He went to bat for me more than once, and he was always a steady presence in my consciousness, if not in my everyday life. Time and distance separated us physically,

but...he was always present.

I will always be grateful to him for his generosity, for his love.

So, in July, my dad died. In October, my academic dad died. I am a bit breathless from it all, but that may just be a sob I'm choking back.

I will always remember you, dear Roy, and I will always be grateful, and I will think of you every time I teach, but especially when I teach ethics, which I am doing this semester, as I write this. And, as is now my long habit, invoking Roy, I say to my students at the end of each class, “Go frolic!”

And now I say it to you, my friend, Roy, wherever you are: “Go frolic!”

(I've always wanted to say that to you.)

A Reflection

By Jenni Simon

University of North Carolina, Greensboro

Jenni, you look like a turtle! It's horrible.”

Roy hated my backpack. I'd just moved to Colorado. As part of a present to myself—in reward for getting into a Ph.D. program—I'd bought a new backpack. It doubled as a hiking pack because, after

all, I was in Colorado. It was mossy green, trimmed in darker mossy green. It had multiple pockets and texture. It could hold all my books and more. It was a great backpack. And, upon reflection...it made me look like a turtle. More importantly, the backpack still *is*. I've never gotten rid of it. Every time I think, "It's time to buy a new backpack," I discard the thought as quickly as it materialized. In part, that backpack is a reminder of a wonderful time in my life, where I learned new ways of being. However, the real reason I've never gotten rid of it is Roy. It reminds me of him. That makes me happy.

We all can hear Roy saying that he hated a backpack, I'm sure. Or that something was, in some way, shape, or form, ridiculous. Whatever "it" was, the recrimination was said in a voice that can only be described as fatherly. And for many of us, he was an academic father figure. He might have evolved into a friend, or a mentor at some point, but for some who are reading this, he was a father figure. He was very much that for me, anyway.

Roy truly lived as he taught. There are so many examples I bring into my classroom that came directly from his seminars. There are so many ways of thinking and knowing that come from discussions he let us have and projects he encouraged us to explore. Roy knew that we needed wings, not shells to retreat into. Maybe that was why he hated my backpack. He wanted his students to soar, not hide in what felt safe.

I miss him.

Never a Wasted Moment: Roy Wood's Legacy of Making Space

By Erin K. Willer
University of Denver

Roy comes to campus so that I can give him a tour of the [Scraps of the Heart Project's](#) (SOTHP) art exhibit. I cannot believe that two years have gone by since his retirement from the Department of Communication Studies at the University of Denver where he served as my colleague and department chair. I founded the SOTHP as a community-engaged research collective of students, researchers, healthcare providers, artists, and bereaved parents working collaboratively to empower families and educate communities about baby loss through art and storytelling. After several community-engaged courses and arts-based workshops with parents who had experienced miscarriage, stillbirth, and neonatal loss, the exhibit is a culmination that features students' projects and parent's artwork. At this time Roy is carrying oxygen and moving slowly, but we carefully make our way around the museum so that I can explain each and every community-engaged project and the creative arts workshops that lead to the vibrant, corporeal, visual stories of pain and joy that comprise the collection.



Erin Willer and Roy Wood at the Scraps of the Heart Project art exhibit in May 2017

After making it around the exhibit, we sit at the picnic table in the middle of the museum where attendees are welcomed to make origami hearts. As I run my fingers along the creases of the already-made heart in front of me, Roy says with his always-twinkling eyes and unquestionable sincerity, “I’m so proud of you.” His words warm me and my eyes well, and I ask him if he remembers the time seven years ago when he came by my office. I eagerly asked, “Do you want to see my paintings?!” Despite not having made art since I was in high school, at this time I had started painting to cope with my experiences with infertility and a recent miscarriage. A talented artist himself, Roy had given me advice for getting started with watercolors. In response to my question, he scooted the extra chair in my office up to my desk to take in the images of the paintings I had saved on my computer. Just like at the exhibit today, he not only listened patiently and attentively as I described the stories that birthed each piece of art, but he was moved by them. A teacher always, he not only praised my work that day, but my courage to begin, to practice, and to make space for my suffering.

Roy Wood’s death has me reflecting on how lucky I am to work at an institution and in a department that have not expected me to follow academic and North American cultural norms that silence grief and loss. As my department chair Roy did not pressure me to zipper up my many losses, including several miscarriages and the neonatal death of my son Milo, in thick, heavy silence that I lugged around behind me on the way to teach my classes. Rather, over the years, Roy made *space*—in front of me and between us—for my grief. His mentoring allowed me to see that art can be a powerful tool, not only for making sense of loss, but in inspiring compassion and community. As a result, the SOTHP exists and I am the teacher and researcher I am, in part, because of the openings Roy created.

In addition to these recollections, today when I close my eyes, my memories of Roy flicker to the time he laid down on the floor of our department’s tiny conference room to play with my fussing three-month-old son during a faculty meeting (see photo). I remember Roy’s “cute outfits” and dapper style that he told me his mother passed down to him. I see the shield that he sketched over and over again during meetings. I feel the way he seemed to pass a piece of his soul into mine with the warmth of his embrace; Roy was a good hugger (see photo). I hear his words during our last lunch together telling me that anything that I do that does not fill my heart’s purpose is “all a waste of time.” Indeed, I believe that Roy Wood never wasted a moment of his own life, as each teaching minute was a lesson filled with making space for great love.



Fyodor Willer and Roy Wood
Faculty Meeting, April 2015



Erin Willer and Roy Wood
Retirement Dinner, May 2015

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- If you wish to receive a private response from our members, enclose your email address in your note and encourage people to send you a note using that address, rather than the group address.

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