

# Retired UCSC faculty member Ronald H. Ruby dies

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SENTINEL STAFF REPORT

A memorial is planned Nov. 23 for Ronald H. Ruby, a physicist and one of the first faculty members at UC Santa Cruz, who died Nov. 5. He was 70.

Born in San Francisco, his parents were part of the Jewish chicken-farming community in Petaluma. He discovered early his fascination with designing and building the right apparatus.

He attended UC Berkeley, earning a bachelor's degree in physics, then served in the U.S. Navy before returning to UC Berkeley for a doctorate, working on magnetic resonance phenomena.

He turned his attention to photosynthesis, devising new equipment to try to understand the process, after working in the lab of UC Berkeley professor Melvin Calvin, who won a Nobel prize for his work on the role of carbon in photosynthesis.

In 1965, Mr. Ruby was recruited to UCSC to work at the newly established Cowell College, where he won a prestigious Sloan Fellowship for photosynthesis research.

During his tenure at UCSC, he became known for his teaching innovations.

**NAME:** Ronald H. Ruby

**BORN :** Dec. 1, 1932 in San Francisco.

**DIED:** Nov. 5, 2003, in Santa Cruz

**EDUCATION:** BA, PhD from UC Berkeley; postdoctoral work at Massachusetts Institute of Technology

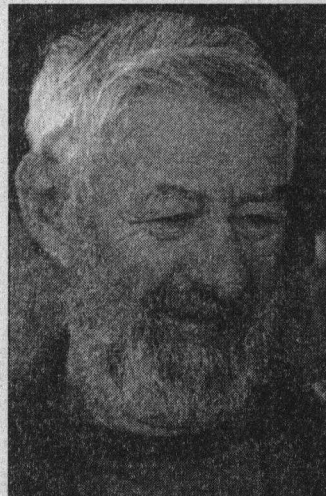
**OCCUPATION:** Physicist on faculty of UC Santa Cruz, from 1965 to 1991; conducted research at UCSC and University of Oslo in Norway

**SURVIVORS:** Mother Ruth Bittmann of Oakland; wife Dorothy Bell Ruby of Santa Cruz;

two daughters, Leah Williams of Cambridge, Mass., and Rachel Ruby of North Monterey County; two sons, Michael Ruby of Boulder, Colo., and Joel Ruby and two grandchildren.

**SERVICES:** 2 p.m. Nov. 23 at Cowell College Library at UCSC, with his ashes scattered at sea off the Santa Cruz coast.

**DONATIONS:** UC Santa Cruz Foundation- Ruby Award, University Relations, Carriage House, UCSC 1156 High St., Santa Cruz, CA 95064. This award will be presented annually for excellence in teaching natural sciences at UCSC.



Colleague Peter Scott recalled how he would act out the part of famous physicists like Isaac Newton for his students. He explained centrifugal forces as students whirled around on a funhouse carousel and he composed the "Electricity and Magnetism Calypso" to help them understand the features of electric fields.

Mr. Ruby designed a homespun oscillator using a hacksaw blade, a photo cell and a flashlight bulb

to demonstrate harmonic oscillation.

"It was completely ingenious," said Scott, adding that the device is still used in physics labs on campus.

Mr. Ruby met Dorothy Bell, a graduate student in psychology as he began graduate school. His wife recalled his sense of showmanship was not confined to the classroom. One birth announcement reads, "It's a baby," showing the proud

father in a boater and cane, clicking his heels, tap dance style.

The couple raised four children in Santa Cruz, but spent two years abroad, living in Oslo, Norway, from 1972 to 1974. The first year, Mr. Ruby was on sabbatical; the second year, he had a Norwegian fellowship.

"It was a nice place to go back to, and a nice place to take our children," his wife said.

The couple had visited the coun-

try when they were just married, and had always wanted to return.

As the campus grew, Mr. Ruby played an active role, serving on the committees writing a long-range development plan, setting up an electronics lab and overseeing recreation and physical education. He chaired the Academic Senate, the faculty governing body, and the Physics Board, and served as associate dean of natural sciences. He also found time to coach the rugby team.

He liked to go for long bicycle rides, 20 to 30 miles, on Sunday mornings, sometimes heading up Branciforte Drive then down Old San Jose Road or Rodeo Gulch back to Santa Cruz.

"He'd say, 'Let's meet under the eagle,'" said Peter Scott, using his term for the statue across from the downtown post office. "We miss that guy."

After retiring in 1991, Mr. Ruby took the opportunity to bicycle, sail, travel, spend time with his grandchildren and compete in rowing and Nordic skiing — a sport he had taken up while living in Norway. His wife noted that each activity required special equipment with an interesting history and plenty of room for technical innovation.