

## DIANE

Roy Alan Nierenberg was born July 5, 1945, in New York to his young parents Juliet and Gerry who married as soon as Juliet finished high school. He was soon joined by brothers Roddy and George, and the family moved from Queens to Long Island.

While in high school, Roy spent a summer in France with The Experiment in International Living. Throughout his life Roy stayed in touch with his hosts, the Pellerin family, who affectionately called him by his French name, Gaston. When Roy and Mimi visited Mme. Pellerin in 2008, nearly a half century after Roy had spent the summer in her house, she showed them the charming letter she had received from Roy in the 1960's, introducing himself before he arrived in France. Looking to replicate the challenge and adventure of his summer in France, after three years at a public high school on Long Island, Roy transferred to a boarding school, Philips Exeter Academy in New Hampshire, where he formed a life-long friendship with another student who had also transferred in for the last year or two.

## ED

Roy was my best friend. He and I met in the lab of a nuclear physics course at Exeter, where we partnered with two other students, Joe Gordon and Paul Chang. We took great delight in measuring radioactive isotopes, without, I hope, getting radiated ourselves. Roy called our lab group "two Jews, a Black and a Chinese." Sadly, Joe and Paul passed away many years ago. Most students went to Exeter for four years and had formed cliques by the time we arrived. Roy and I bonded together as outsiders and remained close friends for the rest of his life. Many years later, when everyone had mellowed with age, we formed friendships with many of our old, no longer stand-offish, classmates. We started a weekly zoom group with two of them – David Stern and Wendell Goddard - and our meetings became an important part of Roy's life. With Huntington's, Roy could no longer travel alone, and I took him to our 60<sup>th</sup> reunion at Exeter in 2023. He really enjoyed returning to campus and seeing old classmates.

While we were students at Exeter, Roy invited me on a school holiday to his family home on Long Island, where I met his parents and brothers – and their delightful pug, Wolfgang, named for Wolfgang Amadeus Mozart. I don't remember whether Wolfgang had a musical bark. Some years later, when Roy and I were in college, he came down to visit my family in Caracas, Venezuela, where my father was in charge of the US embassy. He took the two of us along on joint naval maneuvers in the Caribbean with American, Venezuelan, and Colombian navies. A few of the destroyers blew their boilers, to our amusement. It was during the Vietnam War, and at the end of the maneuvers, one of the naval officers came up with a big smile and asked us, "Now that you've seen action at sea, do you think you'll join the navy after graduating?" To which Roy said, "Actually, I'm planning to go to grad school."

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Roy went on to receive a BA from Columbia University where he majored in Physics, a Juris Doctor from the University of Pennsylvania Law School and a Master of Arts in Economics from George Washington University.

Roy first worked as a lawyer for the federal government in Washington DC for ten years in a variety of positions, including service at the White House Council on Wage and Price Stability in the Ford and Carter administrations and as an attorney for the US Postal Service and the Federal Power Commission. During this time, he had an early marriage to Yolanda Garitsen, originally from Holland who remained a life-long friend.

In 1976 Ed and I got married and Roy was the best man. In that role, Ed asked Roy to set up a tape recorder to record the music, the ceremony and the toasts. We had a lovely Baroque quartet that was to play music as the guests arrived. As Roy set up the recorder, the head of the quartet stopped him and explained that they were union members and could not be recorded. Roy, ever the problem solver, asked how he could make it happen. The woman replied that he would have to call the head of the local musicians' union. Roy got the phone number, went to the nearest phone and called. There was no answer. So, Roy returned to the musicians with a smile on his face. "I called him," he said as he turned on the tape recorder and everyone was happy

## ED

In 1977 and 1979 Roy came to visit us in Berkeley. The three of us put on heavy packs and went backpacking to Thousand Island Lake in the high Sierra on the first visit, and on the second visit Roy and I went to the Palisades near Mount Whitney, the highest peak in the lower 48, going up to glaciers and scrambling around cliffs. Roy suggested coming back a day or two early, which was really fortunate since Diane went into labor three weeks sooner than expected, and I got home just in time to be with her and witness the birth of our first son, David - thanks to Roy! On that second visit he became enamored of our front door neighbor Linda and promptly relocated to Berkeley. The relationship didn't last long but the geographical home did.

## DIANE:

In the early 1980's, Roy and Mimi met at a very early morning meeting of the Economic Round Table Breakfast Club in San Francisco. They married in 1985 in the old Archbishop's Mansion on Alamo Square in San Francisco, which had been repurposed into a bed and breakfast. After Roy lovingly watched Mimi descend the curved staircase to their chuppah and after an evening of celebration, some of their family and friends joined them in spending the night in the Mansion where each room was decorated to represent a different opera. Roy and Mimi went on to have two beautiful children, Jovia and Zeke from whom you will hear later.

It was clear to Roy that he didn't want to continue working as a lawyer and in 1983 he drew on his interest in computers to found Experience In Software, in which he envisioned and developed all of the company's programs: Webplanner, Project KickStart, The Idea Generator, and The Art of Negotiating. In fact, his transformation from attorney to software creator was chronicled in Chapter One of the book Life After Law: Second Careers for Lawyers by Mary Ann Altma. He was very proud of having left law! During the company's heyday Roy developed products which recombined data provided by the user, distilled through an expert project-management prism, in a sort of precursor to today's Artificial Intelligence. Roy was especially gifted in observing his "beta testers" and tweaking the software in response, to become ever more user friendly, and like a real human voice.

#### ED

Roy's interests were many and diverse. He was engaged in politics and spent a great deal of time texting and interacting with voters. He ushered for the San Francisco Opera and Ballet where one had to put in time at many Nutcrackers to qualify to usher at an opera. He sang bass in the Berkeley Community Chorus and Orchestra. Roy was on the Board of the Sakai Foundation – a group sponsoring cultural, educational and sports exchanges with Japan. He practiced Qi Gong. He roasted a goat in Codornices Park for a birthday party.

Roy overcame a great deal of adversity in his life. After surviving leukemia about two decades ago, he felt that each day was a gift and that everything in his life was extra. Despite his diagnosis of Huntington's Disease fifteen years ago, he continued to face life with a smile and positivity. As a relative remarked, "He taught me that even though I'm sick, I don't have to be cranky." I and many of his friends were struck by how cheerful Roy remained through all his medical problems. He was very active with several Huntington's disease groups and research studies. He also testified on behalf of Huntington's patients at the FDA. He spoke at a national conference of the Huntington's Disease Society of America on how he was able to live a good life despite his diagnosis. Many members of the community have mentioned that Roy taught them that there is joy in life after a diagnosis of Huntington's Disease.

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As I began to email and text people in our life, telling them of Roy's stroke and death, the return emails and texts were universal in mentioning what a kind, sweet man Roy had been and what a fiercely loyal friend as well. He was an out-of-the-box thinker and as a friend said, he could always bring down the temperature of things when conversations got too hot. Roy had the ability to make friends everywhere. He would talk to the janitor in the airport or a stranger walking down the street to find out more about them. No one was just wallpaper in Roy's life, everyone was important to him.

