

Recollections of Ray Henkel, from former students and friends, May-June 2017

Michael McGlade, Professor of Geography, Western Oregon University

Here are a few things that I would like to write about Ray. Thanks for the opportunity to share them.

He was really great about seeing connections. As an example, the work that he, Randy Cerveny and I did on climate and cocaine was really all about Ray's keen eye when he was doing field work in Bolivia. Randy and I, (with an assist from Robert Balling) used a data set that he had in one of his rare reports to do some simple correlations between rainfall and coca leaf production. Really Ray and Randy were the essential researchers in this, but both of them were generous and offered me first authorship. I couldn't have done it without either one of them, but especially Ray - because he had the idea and the data. The first of two publications we got out of this went into Nature as scientific correspondence, a pretty good gift to me as a first time publication!

We kept in pretty regular contact over the years, with many phone calls. For some reason the calls started happening more often after I had flown down for Ray's 80th birthday party, with about half of them initiated by him, and the others by me. We started talking about politics in those later years, I think because I first expressed an interest. But he responded with enthusiasm, and we had many great conversations. He always had quite a command of what was going on in Arizona and the United States.

But for me what was even more remarkable about Ray was his humanity. He was never short of a kind word, and generous almost to a fault. And even the little things about him in this sense were remarkable. For example, I remember one time we were driving somewhere when I was a grad student and someone was very rudely tail-gating us. The person passed us and cut it pretty close, dangerously so, as I recall. While I was about to say something vulgar or critical about the driver and other such people, he just said gently something to the effect that perhaps the person was in an emergency situation.

That openness and welcoming spirit was part of why he was particularly liked by international students, I think. His insatiable curiosity about their world's was immediately obvious and sincere. And many, many of them kept in contact with him for many years after their sojourn at ASU.

Perhaps Ray and I had such a connection partly because we both came off the farm, literally. I grew up on a farm and had bought some land and rented more during the first decade of my adulthood, and had eventually come to Arizona State after having sold my little place. I was pretty simple and unsophisticated in some ways as I went through the Geography grad programs at ASU, and Ray seemed to understand that about me. As we began to work more closely together on my thesis, he would toss out little questions as a way to get me redirected when he felt I needed it. And I'll never forget - he asked the toughest question of anyone at my PhD dissertation defense. I was a little flat-footed on that one, only later more fully absorbing what he was getting at.

would like to say in closing that, other than my wife of 26 years (who adored Ray), there was no person more significant in my development as an adult than Ray. And I am sure that there are others who feel the same way.

Tony Occhiuzzi, Geology Adjunct, Mesa Community College, formerly earth science & chemistry teacher, Tempe Union High School District and elsewhere in Arizona

Ray Henkel was my first World Geography instructor at Arizona State University in 1968, after I transferred from Mesa Community College. He convinced me to join Gamma Theta Upsilon and become involved with the monthly geography club activities. Later, I was elected President in 1970-1971. When I was a student at ASU beginning in 1968, I did not realize that Ray would become my life long advisor, mentor and friend throughout my 40-year teaching career in geography and physical science.

In 1976, Ray's advice strongly influenced my early teaching career, when the State of Arizona combined geography and history into one class. I was upset with the direction of geography education in Arizona, and following his advice; I went into the field of physical science and taught earth science and chemistry. In 2013, I retired from teaching in the Tempe Union High School District.

Each semester for teachers, Ray would offer evening graduate classes necessary to complete requirements for a Masters Degree. He truly loved and respected geography educators. As Ray got to know you, he even traveled with your class on field trips throughout Arizona and especially the Grand Canyon. He traveled with my MCC geology class on its yearly road trip to Trona, California to collect Salt Crystals. 100 miles North of Barstow, California in an area called Searle's Lake, the students get to collect beautiful salt crystals from an open Playa. Ray enjoyed the outdoors and was very knowledgeable about the environment.

On January 29, 2011, along with Becky Harsh, my wife Diana and myself, we celebrated Ray's 80th birthday at the SRP Pera Club in Tempe. It was an evening of the "Who's Who" in geography education, along with friendships Ray made as a professor, mentor and his immediate family. What amazing stories and experiences by those who were touched by Ray Henkel.

Ronald W. Snow, Emeritus Research Fellow & Research Professor, Mississippi State University

I came to the geography program at ASU as a masters student in the fall of 1967. Ray had just returned from conducting research in Bolivia. I was fascinated by the stories he told of his experiences there. I think I took every class Ray taught. Most of his classes were taught at night, and the discussions often continued over a few beers at a near-by establishment. Ray was full of information and had ideas for all kinds of potential research topics. He made learning fun and loved interacting with students, both graduates and undergraduates. Many of our departmental parties were held at his house.

I fondly remember the summer of 1968 when Ray, Russell Anderson, Lanny Powell, and I took a trip in Ray's old green Plymouth station wagon to Guadalajara where Russell was conducting research for his thesis. I also remember the time Ray came to my house and cooked chorizo. My wife remembers, too, because she had to try to wash the red chorizo grease off the kitchen walls. Ray was one of the people in my life who had faith in me and helped convince me to pursue a Ph.D. I am eternally grateful. He was my teacher, mentor, and friend. I miss him.

Martha Works, Professor Emerita of Geography, Portland State University, Oregon

Ray was unusual in academics for his genuine kindness and unflagging support of students. When I approached him in 1978 to talk about my intent to do field research in the Amazonian region of Peru, he did not bat an eyelash, and helped me every step of the way. His contacts and familiarity with the region opened doors for me and allowed me to understand the tropical

rain forest regions of Peru and Bolivia through the lenses someone with deep insight into the area. I greatly appreciate the time and attention he devoted to helping me get my master's degree back in '78-'80. It helped give me a career in Geography and Latin American Studies and I'm forever grateful!

Klaus Frantz, Professor, University of Innsbruck, Austria

I met Ray Henkel when I first came to ASU in 1983. At the time I was an assistant professor at the University of Innsbruck in Austria. From 1985 to 1986, I spent a year in Arizona with my family while I conducted research on Native Americans in Arizona and surrounding areas, and during that period I got to know Ray quite well.

Ray was a stunningly helpful, completely selfless person. He set me in contact with people that could help me with my research. But he was helpful in many other ways, even assisting me and my family to get an old car that we could afford. He had an ability to listen to people and understand their needs. His house was a meeting place for students and others that he took care of.

He was a professor – but in terms of his humane, selfless way of dealing with people, he was a quiet beacon. He was full of knowledge, a wise man.