

Roger Charles Wood

January 17, 1932 - July 17, 2013

Roger C. Wood, emeritus professor of Computer Science and Electrical and Computer Engineering at UC Santa Barbara, died peacefully on July 17th in his home in Santa Barbara, surrounded by his family. He was 81 and had endured Lewy-body disease with grace and dignity for two years.

Professor Wood was born in Minneapolis, Minnesota, on January 17, 1932. He studied applied mathematics and was in the Air Force ROTC at the University of Minnesota, where he met Ann Elizabeth Wilson on a blind double date arranged by a Sigma Chi fraternity brother. They married on August 28, 1954 and took their first of many camping trips together on their cross-country drive to their first home in San Diego, California.

With the end of the Korean War, Roger's ROTC commitment ended and he began his career in analog computation at Ryan Aeronautical Company working on flight simulation and controls for the X13 and other innovative aircraft. During a brief return to Minnesota to complete his masters degree, Roger was drafted and served six months in the US Army. Roger then returned to San Diego and Ryan Aeronautical Company where he wrote his monograph "Principles of Analog Computation" with George Smith. He subsequently moved to Systems Development Corporation in Santa Monica. While continuing to work full time, he studied communications and analog, digital, and hybrid computing technologies at the University of California, Los Angeles, earning his PhD in Electrical Engineering in 1966.

Moving to Santa Barbara in 1965, he joined the then Electrical Engineering

Department at the University of California, Santa Barbara. Roger played an instrumental role in developing the undergraduate engineering curriculum. He was an exceptional teacher, a powerful advocate for students, and an innovative educator, creating some of the first courses in engineering writing and professional ethics. His passion for teaching resulted in numerous honors, including the Mortar Board Professor of the Year Award, the UCSB Academic Senate Distinguished Teaching Award, and the UCSB Affiliates Professor of the Year Award. Roger continued to serve student educational needs as Associate Dean for Student Affairs until his retirement in 1993, and taught one course a year until 2005.

Roger was an avid sportsman, playing basketball and floor hockey until his early 70's and was known for his scrappy defense and bony elbows. He took great pride in being inducted into the UCSB Intramural Hall of Fame for his longstanding participation with the Jolly Rogers and support of the program. Roger also loved the outdoors, spending several weeks every summer in the mountains of Yosemite. Days were spent with a pipe, a fishing pole, and a Louis L'Amour novel and nights with a guitar, red wine, and a campfire. Most importantly, Roger was devoted to his wife, partner, and best friend of nearly 59 years and their family. He delighted in her Santa Barbara Choral Society concerts and his children's and grandchildren's sporting and performance events. He had a story or a pun for every occasion, and maintained a genuinely sunny outlook even through adversity. Roger's family would like to express their deepest gratitude to the caregiving team led by Jeremy Bordofsky.

He is pre-deceased by his parents Carl E. and Shirley M. (Chase) Wood and his sister Marcy Kaltenbach. He is survived by his wife, Ann, a well-known retired early-childhood educator, four children, twelve grandchildren, and one great-grandchild (expected): Jenny (and Edward) Hawkes of Santa Maria, CA (Michael, Stuart (and Leah), Erin, Samuel, Patrick, and Andrew), Professor David Wood (and Jane Doughty) of Madison, WI (Alexander and Zachary Wood-Doughty), Dr. John (and Dr. Ruth) Wood of South Pasadena, CA (Lyle,

James, and Marion), and James (and Jen) Wood of Mt. Shasta, CA (Levi). Individuals who would like to share personal remembrances or photos are encouraged to post online at <http://www.wrhsb.com/obituaries/Roger-Wood/>. In lieu of flowers, the family requests support for The Roger Wood Endowment at UCSB; proceeds support undergraduate education (<https://secure.my-websites.org/supporter/donatenow.do?n=Fs@5Cs&dfdbid=1104290>). A memorial service for Roger will be held at the Unitarian Society of Santa Barbara, 1535 Santa Barbara Street, Santa Barbara, CA, 93101 (phone 805-965-4583) on August 31st at 2PM.

Previous Events

Celebration of Life

AUG 31. 2:00 PM (PT)

Unitarian Society
1535 Santa Barbara St.
Santa Barbara, CA 93101

Tribute Wall

DB

“ *Just an incredible person: never met a professor more caring or motivating professor or person. Haven't seen him in years, thought of him, googled and learned he passed.*

Sad, but happy to have had him in my life and that he contributed to the person I have become.

Daryl Bryant - July 26, 2015 at 09:05 PM

AT

“ *I was one of Roger's Ph.D. students, I believe his last, and he was always supportive, available, and a wonderful role model.*

Roger loved to teach students at all levels and, at UCSB, he helped build the College of Engineering and shaped the work of many students. Personally, Roger helped me in many ways: I left UCSB as a more confident engineer. I learned how to approach new engineering problems, and I learned to hone my intuition, but to always back it up with data. While I happily spent hours on end in his office talking about technical questions, much of that time was spent listening to his stories and hearing all about his family, which he clearly loved dearly and in which he had so much pride.

In the years after my graduation, I visited with Roger at his home a few times, including a wonderful lunch with him, Ann and my wife. We also exchanged a few emails, the most recent being when my children were born. I will miss Roger, but I will always remember his stories, his smile and his ever-present laugh.

Adam Talcott - September 03, 2013 at 11:46 AM

DJ

“ We came to UCSB about the same time -- he was imprinted on my idea of UCSB as a faculty member, intramural team member, community person, and best of all, friend. Roger shared his computer knowledge when I needed it -- which was a lot as an administrator; he shared his athletic skills as team captain for flag football and, later, softball teams that I played poorly on; and he was an unflagging friend -- one who lifted the spirits of everyone he encountered. His egalitarian qualities endeared him to me and to many others. I have missed him.

Dick Jensen - September 02, 2013 at 12:30 PM

HB

“ I will forever associate Roger with our annual family camping trips to Tenaya Lake, when my sister and I were growing up. I'll always think of his big boots and floppy hat and plaid shirt, with his pipe sticking out of his wry, knowing smile. I'm a year younger than Jim (known then as Jimbo), and to my sister and me the Woods were a huge family who caught schools of fish (oh, those Tenaya trout!) with an immense tent that had tables and chairs, where we'd play cards and charades with their towering kids. (I'm a year younger than Jim, known then as Jimbo.) Their campsite was the one with the big rock and the giant campfire that attracted dozens of people in the evenings, and Roger would administer libations to the adults in their coffee mugs and play the harmonica and act as the master of ceremonies. If he wasn't telling a story or a joke, he'd still look at you like you were sharing some humorous thought.

Now here I have to geek out a bit, and confess that when I first read about Tom Bombadil in the Lord Of The Rings, I pictured Roger. He seemed to have just sprouted up out of the soil of the natural world, with some story to tell or song to sing about everything in it. He was in on the Big Joke.

I am so grateful to have these memories of such a generous soul. Tenaya Lake is a treasure to my family; some of our best memories live there. I send love to everyone in the Woods family, who can take some credit for that. The memorial was beautiful!

-Heather Boyd

Heather Boyd - August 31, 2013 at 08:21 PM

HB

Whoops! Sorry, this needed some editing!

Heather Boyd - August 31, 2013 at 11:28 PM

SL

“ I have many fond memories of my meetings with Roger. He was always a voice of reason and encouragement. His enthusiasm and dedication to undergraduate education and students inspired me and helped me to see the bigger picture of what engineering education is all about.

Steve Long

Steve Long - August 31, 2013 at 03:16 PM

“ *These Are Not Forgotten Years/ Noon League*

*... so Roger was a Unitarian.
That explains a lot of things.*

*Playing basketball with Roger
was never a matter of “I wish he’d talk more.”*

On the court some players talk trash, seeking an edge while working out childhood traumas, but Roger talked a different game. Roger talked Roger - how he saw your game, complimenting a good shot when you made one, telling you of a bad shot if you took one, expressing his own joy if he blocked one. I remember that he ran a certain way when he was happy with himself. I think we all do.

I didn’t know Roger well, but I liked him because he didn’t seem to be a perfectionist, at least on the court ... perfectionists annoy me, but Roger was a player who seemed to accept his own mistakes. He was always heard, but seldom loud. And he had a funny laugh that seemed to run up his nose.

Roger was older than us all and a picture of things to come for those of us who showed up every day at noon in Rob Gym. He was clearly an inspiration as we all aimed to play the game as long as he did. And he was among a select group who enjoyed the privilege like his good friend Mike Stevenson, of playing hoops with his son. I know that was special for him.

The last time I saw Roger was perhaps two years ago at Mac-Mechanic.

He looked almost the same especially in the eyes except you could tell he was broken.

He and I had often guarded each other because we were both ancient and the same size. He had a hookshot, and I had a trick shot, over my head down in the low post.

*Only two people ever blocked that over-the-head shot.
Dennis Cooper and Roger.*

*That day at Mac-Mechanic, Roger and I exchanged what I guess
you call pleasantries. But the last thing that Roger said to me, he
said with a smile that was classically himself - "I still know how to
block that shot."*

*Such is the blessing of sharing Life with Roger.
He was appreciated and will be missed.*

Paul Fleischauer

Paul Fleischauer - August 31, 2013 at 12:27 PM

IB

“ I was the first Ph.D. candidate at UCSB under Roger as the Chairperson of the Committee. I truly believe that any accomplishments I have had, are 100% attributable to Roger's personal leadership, involvement and full commitment to my quest for a higher degree.

In an era in which everyone else was looking at the DarpaNet, voice modeling, digital control systems, and a variety of other sophisticated technologies, Roger convinced the doctoral committee to approve my idea of developing the "hybrid propulsion system", which is what many hybrid car makers are using today.

Maybe I had the idea, but Roger had the foresight of approving the topic, and the ability to provide active advice and support during the effort. I could not have done it without Roger's daily and persistence support. More than once I was ready to "throw in the towel", but Roger would not let me do it. His insights and help in developing the non-linear mathematical model of the internal combustion engine are clearly an indication of the wide range of his knowledge and capabilities.

I will forever be grateful to Roger for his guidance, friendship, encouragement and trust. He was a person with a great mix of practical and academic experience, second to none.

Roger: THANK YOU.

Isaac (Itzik) Barpal, M.S. E.E. 1968; Ph.D. E.E. 1970

Isaac Barpal - August 31, 2013 at 12:21 PM

CH

“ Roger was a great human. The Jolly Rogers were great teams because of him. While it was great learning Fortran from him, it was best competing along side him. My memories include his classic running hook shot and toughness on the hockey floor. He once took a hockey puck to the eye brow in pregame warm ups and played the game as unfazed by the wound inflicted by his own team mate (Ski). I was fortunate to be on Jolly Roger teams with Roger and his son John in the early 80's.

Chris Wittak, student, friend, and teammate

Chris - August 31, 2013 at 12:03 PM

PL

“ In 1977, I was hired to run the UCSB IM Sports Program and found Roger Wood to be the program's biggest ally. Roger provided much wisdom & savvy in protecting student funded facilities and programs ensuring that "interest" be the only prerequisite for participation and not skill or the ability to pay. His Jolly Rogers teams are legendary and served to connect students/faculty & staff in an informal environment providing fun, fitness & friendship. For his ubiquitous involvements, Roger was inducted to UCSB Recreational Sports' Hall of Fame. We have lost an icon, a pillar of our UCSB Community. Thank you Roger for your infectious laughter, for your amazing ability to bridge faculty/staff & students, for your numerous contributions and most of all for your friendship thru the years!!!
Paul Kuan Lee, Director of Recreational Sports 1977-2012

Paul Kuan Lee - August 30, 2013 at 02:56 PM

JB

“ The last time I saw Roger was at graduation in 2011. We took a Jolly Roger reunion picture with Terri Coleman and John Macfarlane. Those games were a highlight for me for many years. Roger was great a strategist in floor hockey. We weren't as fast as other teams, but we still won more than our share. We rarely had fans in the bleachers, but I remember one game against a fraternity team that had 20 fans watching, and as we walked off, one girl called down to the opposing team, "I can't believe you got beat by a bunch of old guys".

Roger, you will be missed. You were a great leader, on the faculty and in intramurals.

John



John Bowers - August 30, 2013 at 02:37 PM

JJ

“ Roger Wood. What can you say? I think back about him and UCSB frequently and all with deep fondness and gratitude. It's one thing to be a brilliant teacher, and another to be a superb role model. In combination, they are simply fantastic, and that is just a tiny facet of Dr. Wood. Others have remembered his athletic endeavors and enthusiastic creativity in teaching, but he made me feel like part of his family, too. I was honored when he found out that I was not just an engineering student, but also played drums. He invited me to a rehearsal with his church group that was putting on a 'homebrew version' of Jesus Christ Superstar. It clicked, and I was 'in' the group, and we gave multiple west coast performances. It seemed like everywhere the Wood family went, a spontaneous party broke out, and his church group was like minded!

Now, I've heard people tell jokes before, but Roger had some favorites, and the one that never fails make me laugh out loud was his rendition of 'The Foo Bird'. You may know the joke, but if you haven't heard Roger's version, you haven't really laughed. He would 'flap his wings' and shout 'Foouooooo', 'Foouooooo!' I don't know, but maybe you had to be ther . . .

Will miss him, dearly!

Jesse Jenkins

Jesse Jenkins - August 30, 2013 at 01:38 PM

BC

“ I joined the ECE Dept. in 1986 and met Roger that year and then would see him playing basketball at Rob gym during lunch. We both had a love for sports and engineering. He then recruited me for his floor hockey team The Jolly Rodgers even though I had never held a hockey stick in my life having grown up in Santa Barbara. He taught me how to play and I fell in love with the game. Even though I spent the most minutes of anyone on the team in the penalty box, two straight seasons, he never gave up on me!

My favorite memory was one noon time basketball game where I had intercepted a pass and was on a fast break alone with just Rodger under the basket defending it. I thought that I would just jump right over him and get an easy lay up. He timed his jump perfectly and blocked my shot, with no foul! I yelled at him, "Rodger" and he just smiled.

*Brian Carralejo
Development Engineer
Solid State Lighting & Energy Center*

Brian Carralejo - August 30, 2013 at 12:51 PM

YW

“ Yukina Warner lit a candle in memory of Roger Charles Wood



Yukina Warner - August 30, 2013 at 10:24 AM



“ I remember Roger as being the great listener. He would puff on his pipe and come up with a new "take" on whatever you were working on. He was religious without being overtly religious about it. He helped me through the early years of the graduate program with great care, understanding, and intellectual savvy.

Of particular interest was his support of Dr. Glen Culler, and his role in a triumvirate position with Dr. Dave Harris and Dr. Jim Howard supporting UCSB's participation as one of the first four nodes on the ARPANET (now known as Internet) in the DARPA contract.

But everyone knows Roger by that laugh you could hear down the hall in Engr. I, 3rd floor. And, omigosh ... the scaling issues in EE150!

Dave Retz - August 29, 2013 at 11:17 PM

EW

“ I will always remember Dr. Wood as a great teacher, the chairman of my PhD thesis committee, and most of all as a good friend.

I first got to know him when I took his “Analog Computing” class; one of the best classes ever. He had lots of stories about his work on the simulator he had built for the “Pogo”, the first vertical takeoff plane and always bragged that he had more “flight hours” than the test pilots who flew the real plane.

Roger truly cared about his students and interacted with us constantly. His office was always open for questions, and more importantly, for a friendly chat. He loved participating in sports of all kinds. We became friends when I joined his Intramural slow-pitch-softball team, the Jolly Rogers, in 1969. He always organized the volleyball games at the picnics the IEEE held regularly in Stow Grove park. But the times that I enjoyed most of all were the daily, late afternoon, doubles ping pong matches with him on the second floor of the Engineering building.

My favorite story about Roger happened when my daughter enrolled in Electrical Engineering at UCSB. During her first freshman class orientation meeting, Dr. Wood recognized her name on the roster and announced to the whole class, “I remember you; I used to carry you around at the department softball games when you were a baby.”

I have only one photograph of Roger. It is candid picture that appeared on the cover of the “1995 UCSB General Catalog” showing Roger and my daughter walking together in front of the UCSB Library. I have posted it to this website.

Dr. Wood played a big part in my life and I will not forget him.

Ed Wrench (UCSB 1965-1974)

Ed Wrench - August 29, 2013 at 01:04 PM

EW

“ 1 file added to the album 1994 Photo



Ed Wrench - August 29, 2013 at 12:57 PM

EW

Roger use to carry "1 year old baby Heather" at the "Jolly Rogers" softball games before she became a UCSB EE Student - Ed Wrench Class of '65

Ed Wrench - August 29, 2013 at 01:02 PM

JG

“ *I fondly remember the Jolly Roger volleyball team that kept us in the athletic fray at UCSB in the late 1960s--a tumultuous time in Isla Vista and the campus. "Uncle Roger" was a valued faculty member of my PhD dissertation team that included Glen Culler and biologist Demorest Davenport. Great times, wonderful place that Roger helped to create and enjoy.*

John Greaves, PhD EE, 1971

John Greaves - August 27, 2013 at 03:24 PM

JN

“ *A great volleyball Dad. I remember Roger well at all the Dos Pueblos games in which I coached John. Rest is peace, Dr. Wood.*
--Jerry Nagl

Jerry Nagle - August 21, 2013 at 12:17 PM

JM

“ I came to Santa Barbara in late 1968 for a job interview with Raytheon. They offered to let me spend half the day looking around UCSB and Meeting with the Head of the Electrical Engineering Department, Dr. Roger Wood. After introductions I told him I was interested in getting my Ph.D. in Electrical Engineering. He said ok, what languages do you know. I groaned internally as I was taking German and French languages at Arizona State and failing miserably. I said well, I speak passable English and I'm Damn good with FORTRAN (a popular-at-the-time computer language). Since he seemed to be such a friendly person, I expected to get at least a chuckle out of him. Instead he considered thoughtfully for a few moments and then said "well we just started the Ph.D. program in EE so I think that will be sufficient". Within two months I was at UCSB finishing up my Ph.D. program on a full time basis with Roger on my Ph.D. committee. I have nothing but the fondest memories of Roger.

John Markel, Ph.D. EE, 1970

John Markel - August 18, 2013 at 09:58 PM

LM

“ To the Wood family, my love and hugs to you all. I have so many fond memories of Roger popping in at our AEYC and Child Care Planning Council work in the living room with Ann. So many mailings completed with a glass of wine in hand and Roger's kind smile. He and Ann were always so loving and kind to each other.....

LuAnn Miller - August 18, 2013 at 08:20 PM

MH

“ My friend and colleague David Wood is articulate and loquacious with a great sense of humor. Upon meeting his father twenty years ago, I learned that these gifts did not arise independently.

I will also never forget Roger's laugh one Halloween, when I arrived with my children to call out: "Trick or treat for Zinfandel."

--Mark Hill

Mark Hill - August 05, 2013 at 10:33 AM

TW

“ I remember him as a strong presence and friendly influence from day 1 summer orientation through graduation. At orientation he said that of you, the person on your right and left, on average one of you will graduate--he motivated me to be the one in three and have some fun and extra curricular engineering activities along the way. Dr. Wood and his cohort Dr. Hynes made a big difference to thousands. -Ted Woods BSME '87

Ted Woods - August 02, 2013 at 11:02 AM

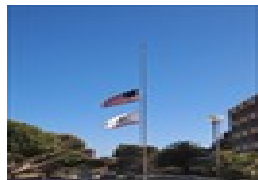
JS

“ I have many a fond memory of Roger, my dad and I on the noon-time courts. His scoop shots will be missed. He was a good friend to my father and my thoughts go out to his family.
John Stevenson, BS Engr '92

John Stevenson - August 01, 2013 at 05:52 PM

JW

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



John Wood - July 31, 2013 at 12:28 AM

KH

“ *Kit Holmlund lit a candle in memory of Roger Charles Wood*



Kit Holmlund - July 28, 2013 at 10:12 AM

KH

Prayers for the family. Roger Wood was a wonderful educator and mentor.

Kit Holmlund - July 28, 2013 at 10:13 AM

BS

“ *Bob Stevenson lit a candle in memory of Roger Charles Wood*



Bob Stevenson - July 26, 2013 at 06:28 PM

TC

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



Terri Coleman - July 25, 2013 at 11:37 AM

DW

“ 1 file added to the album *New Album Name*



David Wood - July 25, 2013 at 03:39 AM

JS

“ *Dear Wood Family,
Our love, thoughts and prayers are with you all as we all grieve together in the loss of this extraordinary man. My family members have many memories of Roger, especially of his humor and his laughter. Roger and I shared a fascination with computers, and the love of our families. We love you all and will always hold great memories, we are here for you always!*

John Sonquist

John Sonquist - July 24, 2013 at 06:32 PM

KR

“ *Kristin lit a candle in memory of Roger Charles Wood*



kristin - July 24, 2013 at 03:52 PM

KR

“ *Dear Wood Family,
Our love, thoughts and prayers are with you all as we grieve together in the loss of this extraordinary man. I have so many memories, over so many years of our family "snerdlings" and can close my eyes to see Roger's amazing smile :) and bellowing laughter. An amazing family man, to every person he met...you felt like family! We love you all and will always hold great memories, we are here for you always! xox Kristin, Graham and Scarlett Firrell*

kristin - July 24, 2013 at 03:52 PM



Because I once took his 152A course and earned an A+, I am deeply grateful to Prof. Roger Wood for being the first person who wrote a letter of support for me that year. I may have been the first graduate in the UCSB ECE PhD program to be granted a third opportunity to take the Screening Exam.

At the 1995 PhD commencement ceremony, when I especially thanked him, he still remembered and replied, "This is a valuable save." To this day, I remain profoundly and deeply grateful to him, and I think of him often.

After graduating, I became a university professor for 20 years, won several first-place awards in the ICCAD Contest, and successfully founded an EDA startup whose main product is currently ranked among the top three in the industry. I often think that without Prof. Wood's help back then, I truly do not know how my life would have turned out.

Today, I suddenly thought of him again and only then learned from Google that he has passed away. With grateful tears, I sincerely pray that he is living happily in heaven, and I pray that his family is healthy and well.

*David YuLiang Wu
March 11, 2026*

YuLiang Wu - March 09 at 03:00 PM