

**George A. Ruff**  
**May 10, 1941 - September 26, 2024**  
**Charles A. Dana Professor of Physics Emeritus**

George Antony Ruff passed away peacefully on Sept 26, 2024, at home in Lewiston with family, after four years of cancer.

George was born in Bayshore, NY, on May 10, 1941, to Joseph and Margaret Zahn Ruff, who came over from Germany as young children. George's mother was hospitalized when he was young, so he was raised by his Daddy, who passed while George was in graduate school, and by his paternal aunt, Clara Ruff, who was a loving grandmother to George's children.

George grew up in Amityville, NY. He received his BS at Le Moyne College and his PhD in physics from Princeton University. After post-doctoral work at Cornell University, he taught and researched at Bates College for 40 years, where he was a Charles A. Dana Professor of Physics and served as Physics Department Chair and Chair of the Sciences Division.

In summers and on sabbaticals, he used his expertise with experimental design and lasers to research atoms at many universities around the world, and carried that research back to engage his students in hands-on research at Bates, often taking joy in crafting the needed research apparatus himself, and teaching his students machining skills as well. George cared deeply about his students, whether physics students or in the Newman Club, the vibrant Catholic student group of which he was advisor. Many became life-long friends.

In addition to traveling to the University of Rochester, M.I.T., and Stanford Research Institute for summer research, George took his family on year-long sabbaticals to the University of Arizona; the Albert-Ludwigs-Universität Freiburg in Germany; the University of Virginia; the University of Otago in Dunedin, New Zealand; and Technische Universität Innsbruck in Austria.

He and his wife of 60 years, Nancy Loesch, met in college. They and their children enjoyed exploring Maine, the U.S., and the world, sleeping in their VW bus that George had converted to fit the young family of 6, or staying in youth hostels where they enjoyed meeting other travelers. Everywhere, George's curiosity and wonder sparked the same in his family, as they mused about how things worked, from cattle guards to the Hoover Dam to how tent fabric without waterproofing can stay dry. Travel continued in retirement: his and Nancy's many hikes over the years included the Annapurna Circuit in Nepal, the Milford Track in New Zealand, rice paddies in China, and Mount Tumbledown in Maine; they also enjoyed sampling local food. Many of the family's explorations throughout Maine, the U.S., and even Europe have been in VWs: over the years George has owned five buses and two bugs and he has enjoyed the community and expertise provided by friends in the Vacationland Volkswagen Association.

Throughout his life, George was an open-minded, devout Catholic. He served as a Eucharistic Minister—first at St. Joseph's Church in Lewiston and then at St. Philip Church in Auburn, where he also served on the finance committee, as co-chair for coffee and donuts (his favorite donut was chocolate frosted), said the Prayer of the Faithful at Mass, and enjoyed comfortable friendships.

He now joins loved-ones who predeceased him: his parents, his Aunt Clara, his brother Joseph, and his brothers- and sister-in-law Walter Gill and Ted and Janet Gaardsmoe.

He leaves loving memories with those who remain: his wife, Nancy; his children (and their spouses) Joseph (Victoria) of California, Daniel (Karen) of Virginia, Susan (David Custer) of Massachusetts, and Arthur (Kate) of Ontario; his grandchildren Rebecca, Alexander, Isabel, Adam, Charlie, Tenzin, Kailee Gett (Mitch Kwitek), and Brenna Gett; his sister-in-law Margaret Gill; and many nieces, nephews, and good friends.

A Funeral Mass will be celebrated at St. Philip Church in Auburn at 11 a.m. on Saturday October 5, 2024. All are welcome. His ashes will be buried in the Aldenville, Pa. cemetery.

George had a humble heart and would never ask to be honored, but former students have created a research fund: In lieu of flowers, a donation may be made through [bates.edu/giving](https://bates.edu/giving): designate "other" and type "Jack Pribram and George Ruff Fund for Student Research".