

# Robert H. Romer

1931-2025



Robert H. Romer, of Amherst, Massachusetts, died peacefully at home at The Arbors on November 2, 2025 at the age of 94 with family by his side. He was a longtime Professor of Physics at Amherst College, a passionate scholar of local history, a strong advocate for justice, and deeply devoted to his family and his community.

Bob Romer was born on April 15, 1931 in Chicago, Illinois and grew up in Cambridge, Massachusetts. He received a B.A. from Amherst College in 1952 and a Ph.D. in Physics from Princeton in 1955. After receiving his Ph.D. he joined the faculty of

Amherst College, where he spent his entire career. From 1988 until his retirement in 2001 he served as the editor of the *American Journal of Physics*. During his time at Amherst he published numerous articles on low-temperature physics in *Physical Review* and *Physical Review Letters*, as well as many articles in the *American Journal of Physics*, *The Physics Teacher*, and other journals. In 1976 he authored the book *Energy: An Introduction to Physics*, which presented the basic principles of physics within the very timely framework of the energy crisis. Bob was passionate about physics and strove to instill a love of the subject in students at all levels.

A strong believer in working toward peace and justice, Bob attended the 1963 March on Washington and participated in multiple protests against the Vietnam War. Wishing to go beyond protesting, he spent the 1969–1970 academic year as a Visiting Professor of Physics at Voorhees College, a historically Black college in Denmark, South Carolina.

Bob married Diana Haynes the day after her graduation from Smith College in 1953 and they remained married until her death in 1992. They raised their three children in Amherst. Bob was an ardent supporter of Diana's work in Amherst town government and was actively involved in the civic life of the town himself. He loved cross-country skiing and took up long-distance running in his fifties, completing the Boston and New York marathons multiple times, including running in the 100<sup>th</sup> Boston marathon on his

65<sup>th</sup> birthday. He also ran the Mount Washington Road Race several times and ran and won the Echo Hill Marathon three times.

Bob married Betty Steele in 1994 and they were devoted partners until her death in 2022. After retirement they supported one another's dedication to new pursuits: Betty became an art docent at the Wadsworth Atheneum and at the Springfield Museums, and Bob became deeply interested in the often overlooked history of slavery in New England. His extensive research on slavery in Old Deerfield eventually led to the installation of Witness Stones commemorating enslaved individuals. Using primary sources, he made an in-depth study of slavery in the area and worked to increase awareness of slavery in the North, authoring the books *Slavery in the Connecticut Valley of Massachusetts* (2009) and *'I am a Bitter Enemy to Slavery': An Amherst College Student Goes to War* (2021). In 2011 he led efforts to properly honor the service of Black Civil War soldiers from Amherst who are buried in West Cemetery.

Bob's numerous honors included elections as a fellow of the American Association of Physics Teachers, the American Physical Society, and the American Association for the Advancement of Science. He also received the Conch Shell Award from the Amherst Historical Society and the Human Rights Award from the Amherst Human Rights Commission.

Bob is survived by his brother, James Romer of Unity, NH; three sons and three daughters-in-law, Evan Romer and Mary Sweeney of Trumansburg, NY, David and Christina Romer of Milton, MA, and Theodore and Shannon Romer of Seattle, WA; four grandchildren, Katherine Stansifer, Paul Romer Present, Matthew Romer, and Ciara Romer; five great-grandchildren; and seven nieces and nephews. He is also survived by a stepson and step-daughter-in-law, Neil and Frances Goodzeit of Berwyn, PA, and a step-grandchild, Elliot Goodzeit. He was predeceased by his parents, Alfred Sherwood Romer and Ruth Hibbard Romer; his first wife, Diana Haynes Romer; his second wife, Betty Steele Romer; his sister, Sally Romer Evans; and his stepdaughter, Alison Goodzeit Aller.

Bob's wide-ranging curiosity and love of sharing knowledge led him to develop a remarkable network of good friends. His quality of life in his final years was greatly improved by the love and companionship of Susan Snively, the Amherst Unitarian Men's Group, and his other dear friends.

The family thanks Bob's professional caregivers for their compassionate care and support.

Robert H. Romer was a devoted husband, father, grandfather, and great-grandfather. He drew deep, personal satisfaction from a lifetime of work as a student, teacher, physicist, and historian. He translated his belief in peace and justice into meaningful action. His was a life well lived. He will be greatly missed.

A celebration of Bob's life will be held at the Unitarian Universalist Society of Amherst at 1:00 p.m. on Saturday, January 17.

In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to Partners In Health, 800 Boylston Street, Suite 300, Boston, MA 02199.