Tribute to Raymond A. Mohl, 1938–2015

Raymond A. Mohl was among the nation’s most productive and influential urban historians. Ray was also the Journal of Urban History’s founding editor and one of the Urban History Association’s first presidents. “He was the most indefatigable researcher I ever met,” commented Georgia Tech University historian Ronald Bayor. Altogether, Ray published thirteen books, more than ninety journal articles, and a host of book chapters, book reviews, and encyclopedia entries. His bibliographical essays were masterpieces of insight and completeness, demonstrating his mastery of several historiographies. He further showed his breadth of knowledge by publishing in fields such as urban history, social welfare studies, African American and civil rights history, ethnic and immigration studies, and southern history; his work dealt with topics ranging from the colonial era to the twenty-first century. His path-breaking work on efforts to block and tear down Interstate highways throughout the United States launched a second wave of investigation into one of the most important phenomena in the development of the twentieth-century city. In mid-career, he became interested in the history of South Florida. Within a short time, reports Johns Hopkins University historian Nathan Connolly, Ray emerged as “the most formidable living historian of Miami.” Explaining his wide-ranging intellectual interests to Franklin & Marshall historian David Schuyler, Ray said, “I can’t imagine writing about the same stuff in the same decade for forty years.”

Ray brought consistent work habits to a career that extended across nearly half a century of scholarly change. He routinely attended three or four historians’ conventions each year. Until recently, Ray arrived at those meetings a day or two early to conduct research in local archives and to visit used bookstores. When he checked in at the conference hotel, he invariably asked the concierge the whereabouts of the best used bookstores and the nearest UPS outlet—the latter so that he could ship home the many books he planned to purchase. Even during his last round of meetings in 2014, Ray attended sessions throughout the day, listening attentively and asking informed questions of presenters. When Ray was not at a session, he could be found at the book exhibit, where he carried several pens and a writing pad in his jacket pocket. As the book exhibits closed, he emerged with catalogs stuffed into side pockets and an armload of purchased books. Ray was a bibliophile, and one of his personal goals was to write richly documented books and articles from his personal collection, which was voluminous. Those lengthy visits to the book exhibit also created opportunities for Ray to chat up editors about future projects and to talk with colleagues about big picture ideas. At day’s end, Ray enjoyed hearty dinners amid large groups, where no one doubted that he was an excellent listener and a voluble contributor to the topics under consideration. A specialty beer in hand, he enjoyed discussing hiring, tenure and promotion, the idiosyncrasies of book and journal editors, and changing patterns of Americanist scholarship. Ray loved to “talk shop,” recalled American University professor and OAH president Alan Kraut. “Having dinner with Ray,” Kraut added, “was always a perfect ending to a day of academic meetings.”

Ray’s immense library and his wide-ranging interests informed his disciplined approach to scholarly production. At its most basic, Ray took great pleasure in reading—history monographs and detective novels were his favorites. The individual actor and her membership in an ethnic group comprised Ray’s favored analytic unit. In turn, Ray found great satisfaction in crafting
words and sentences. He was a fine stylist—clear, clean, evocative, nuanced, and metaphorically rich—and at the same time intent on maintaining his actors and his essay thesis front and center. Ray used editors’ comments to launch into round after round of revisions in search of a more fluent presentation of his ideas. Even after editors accepted final drafts, Ray continued to revise, sometimes right up to publication day.

Ray remained steadfast in his commitment to archival research. He visited archives well past his seventieth birthday and never lost that feeling for the excitement of discovery. Following each visit, Ray spoke enthusiastically about ideas and personalities uncovered, whether black baseball players or anti-highway activists. As Ray and his scholarly cohort aged, observed Blaine Brownell, his long-time friend and colleague, “many of us grew less productive.” Instead of publishing books and articles, Brownell continued, “we drifted into administration or focused on textbooks and interpretive essays based on secondary sources.” In contrast, Ray stuck to the “yeoman work of history.” He “combine[d] the insight and perspective of a senior scholar with the energy and enthusiasm of the graduate student,” marveled Brownell.

Whether explaining the behavior of federal bureaucrats in Washington, D.C., or left-wing Jewish women activists who took up the Civil Rights cause in South Florida, Ray sought to infuse each of those conversations with one or two closely related ideas. First, he studied political action, started by the few, with a view toward understanding how durable social and political change that benefited the many sometimes came about. He relied on news clippings, interviews, and careful observation, for example, to paint a vivid portrait of successful, anti-deportation activists in Alabama. Second, as Professor Connolly determines, Ray possessed “the ability to capture how culture and politics shape everyday people’s engagement with and creation of the built environment, how, indeed, people live community and conflict.” In Ray’s supremely capable hands, highway builders, impoverished early Americans, Civil Rights workers, or Negro League team owners were susceptible to a common approach and to a relatively uniform set of questions.

Ray Mohl grew up in Tarrytown, New York, where he attended the local public schools. His father was a liquor salesman who commuted to work every day into Manhattan. Ray played on his high school football team, and he took pleasure in retelling his coach’s straightforward injunction to knock down any opponent who remained standing. In later years, he enjoyed swimming and, for a time, yoga classes.

Ray attended the distinguished Hamilton College in Clinton, New York, where he majored in history and earned varsity letters in swimming. In a story he repeated countless times across the decades, his parents often asked what he would “do” with a history degree. Close to graduation, Ray’s father offered to secure a job for him calling on liquor customers in New York City. Ray chose instead to accept a fellowship to attend Yale University’s Master of Arts in Teaching (MAT) program. He taught social studies at suburban Valhalla High School for two years following graduation and later described that job as much more demanding than college teaching.

Having decided on a career as a historian, Ray earned the PhD degree at New York University, where he studied under Professor Bayrd Still. The author of books on Milwaukee and New York City, as well as the path-breaking *Urban History: A History with Documents*, Still was one of the influential scholars whose published work helped to convert the study of cities as a component of social history into the independent field of urban history. Along with such historians as Arthur M. Schlesinger, Sr., Blake McKelvey, Bessie Louise Pierce, and Constance McLaughlin Green, Still laid the foundation for urban history that the next generation of scholars (Ray, Blaine Brownell, David Goldfield, and others) established as a discrete and legitimate field of scholarly inquiry.

Besides his eminence as a scholar, Bayrd Still impressed Ray in other ways as well. For one, Still served on New York City’s Landmarks Commission and on the Mayor’s Task Force on the Municipal Archives. In later years, Ray was open to the possibility of establishing connections between his scholarly work and efforts to influence lawmakers. Still’s emphasis on clear and
persuasive writing also made a lasting impression on Ray, who remembered: “Many a dissertation chapter, heavily marked up with his ubiquitous red pencil, was sent back—often more than once—for more polishing.”

In 1967, Ray completed his PhD dissertation on poverty in colonial New York City. Stephen Thernstrom’s Poverty and Progress and the federal government’s War on Poverty had first attracted Ray to the topic. In 1971, Oxford University Press published the revised dissertation as one of the first volumes in Richard Wade’s Urban Life in America Series. The series, which included books by Kenneth T. Jackson, Zane L. Miller, James F. Richardson, Melvin G. Holli, Lyle W. Dorsett, Roger W. Lotchin, Howard P. Chudacoff, Letitia Woods Brown, and many other esteemed scholars, defined the emerging field of urban history. Like many who published first books in the Wade series, Ray sought to understand the historical origins of contemporary problems such as poverty, race relations, and social welfare. Books published in that series, including Ray’s, were highly acclaimed by other scholars, in part perhaps because of the authors’ transparent efforts to link past and present. For many years, senior faculty assigned these books in their classes, and aspiring graduate students poured over the volumes as standard reading for doctoral preliminary exams. The books remain essential reading today both for understanding the growth and development of U.S. cities and for appreciating the field’s historiographical path.

In 1967, Ray accepted a tenure-track assistant professor position at Indiana University Northwest in Gary and subsequently taught there for three years. During that time, he collaborated on the publication of two books that dealt with the history of Gary, Indiana, the experimental industrial community founded by the U.S. Steel Corporation at the southern tip of Lake Michigan. He coauthored The Paradox of Progressive Education: The Urban Plan and Urban Schooling with Ronald Cohen and Steel City: Urban and Ethnic Patterns in Gary, Indiana, 1906-1950 with Neil Betten. Like Bayrd Still and Richard Wade, he and his coauthors divided Gary into geographical zones—but Ray’s zones were less natural or the result of predation. Scheming landowners, impoverished immigrants, and indifferent steel company executives created these zones. Early on, Ray sought to connect developments in Gary with social and economic changes taking place throughout the United States. He was self-conscious about not becoming a “local” historian. Whatever the precise analytic framework, Ray and his coauthors had determined to write about the city in which they lived and worked, and, once again, Ray sought to understand the historical origins of modern Gary’s poverty and its hardened racial climate.

In 1970, Ray joined the history faculty at Florida Atlantic University (FAU), where he remained for the next twenty-six years. While publishing books and articles at a prolific rate, he also participated fully in the life of the department. Although clearly the “academic star” of the unit, he found time to serve as department chair for six years and graduate director for two years. As a good citizen and internationally renowned scholar, he became a role model for younger faculty and a leader in the college and university.

Ray was known at FAU as an outstanding classroom teacher. He enjoyed talking to other history faculty about ideas to be developed in upcoming lectures, and the passion in his voice to bring key ideas to students resonates among former colleagues to the present day. Ray certainly did not seek popularity among undergraduates. He avoided serving on student-organized committees, refused to order pizza for his classes or drink with students at the campus Rathskeller, and declined to invite students to his home for cookouts. He was, to be sure, a no-nonsense grader. Students with serious questions always found Ray attentive—and overflowing with suggestions for paper revisions.

Nor did Ray endeavor to make his office hours a time for casual banter with students. His office, crowded with extra bookshelves, was difficult to navigate. As one more deterrent to idle conversation, he deposited his coat and bag on the lone chair in the office. Among undergraduates, Ray understood his central pedagogic role as that of inculcating large themes, important actors, critical thinking, and sharpened research skills. Ray affirmed the content of his own education as
still valid in a later pedagogic moment. He was the last member of FAU’s U.S. history faculty to
insist that first-year graduate students imbibe Greek and Roman historiography. Serious students
liked Ray’s classroom style. Even among less attentive students, he possessed the classroom mag-
netism to teach urban history in a two-semester sequence, invariably filling both sections.

Ray’s research prowess made a strong impression on FAU’s graduate students, and he guided
a large number of them through MA theses. Many have since completed PhD degrees at other
institutions, earned tenure, and published books. LeeAnn Lands, one of Ray’s MA students in the
early 1990s and now a tenured member of the Kennesaw State University history department,
recalled that he constantly urged seminar members to develop their writing skills. Ray had gradu-
ate students purchase books on writing such as William Zinsser, On Writing Well. According to
Lands, students began to realize that good writing required extraordinary effort. Ray exhorted
students with comments on papers such as “Not bad. Write more drafts.”

In truth, Ray had determined to socialize graduate students into recognizing the sweated
nature of clear prose. As a first step, he revealed personal efforts to achieve a graceful style. Ray
advised impressionable students that he often reread Strunk and White, The Elements of Style. As
a second step, Ray told graduate students about locking himself in the history department’s book-
lined seminar room, pad and pencil in hand, to “ponder . . . what to write” when commencing an
article or book chapter. The net result, according to Lands, was that “we realized that writing was
hard work.” As well, for a brief moment, the students who held their eminent professor in awe
“considered him human.”

In 1992, members of a student committee interviewed Ray and selected him for the campus-
wide good teaching award. FAU administrators honored award winners at the annual convocation.
Faculty, in full academic regalia, entered single-file and took seats on the stage. Ray’s convocation
address broke with tradition. Standing before a packed auditorium of faculty and administrators, he
read a six-page paper that criticized the emergence of conservative ideology in university adminis-
tration. Ray disliked the growing influence of a group including Lynne Cheney at the National
Endowment of the Humanities who had appointed themselves the “guardians of truth, tradition,
purity, and virtue.” University leaders at FAU and nationwide, Ray contended, “seem to have been
cowed into . . . silence.” Ray intended to poke a finger in the eyes of FAU’s timid leaders.

Ray was similarly candid in dealing with administrators. He spoke frankly to chairs, deans,
and provosts about the self-serving and half-baked ideas they often brought before faculty. In one
especially famous episode, faculty had gathered to hear the provost’s reorganization plan. The
college was distended geographically, ran the provost’s argument, and reorganization along the-
matic and interdisciplinary lines comprised his solution. After the presentation, Ray was quick to
his feet. “How did you get so out of touch,” he asked, “that you could . . . think that this plan
would work or be acceptable to faculty?” Other faculty added their criticisms, and the proposed
reorganization scheme quickly evaporated. Eventually, the provost left FAU—to become presi-
dent of a university in Texas.

In another encounter with an administrator, Ray was serving as a member of a search com-
mittee to fill an endowed chair in Jewish Studies. Ray urged a senior administrator to look care-
fully at a candidate who had published seven books. Ray’s favored candidate was currently
 教学 at a small state university. The administrator, however, advocated for a candidate with
one book who was teaching at a more luminescent university. In particular, the administrator
judged the candidate with only one book to be “less Jewish” and thus more likely to succeed
among well-off Jewish households in Boca Raton area fundraising. In this dispute, Ray empha-
sized scholarly production pure and simple. In 1996, when Ray secured an offer from the
University of Alabama in Birmingham, this administrator refused to match it. The administrator
preferred more pliant faculty to those, like Ray, who argued occasionally, won teaching prizes,
and set records for scholarly production. That administrator retired not many years after Ray
departed for Birmingham.
Ray treated tenure and promotion cases in an equally unambiguous fashion. He spoke in favor of a strict accounting of the first six years and for every year after that. By the 1970s, Ray’s formula for the award of tenure and promotion had achieved institutionalization at the nation’s stronger universities. He expected candidates to do a fine job teaching, to publish articles and a monograph, and to demonstrate a research trajectory in the form of papers, articles, or grant applications. “Ray always asked me what I was working on,” Steve Engle, one of Ray’s last FAU hires, recalled, “and when was the ‘book’ coming out.” Engle understood that Ray expected him to “carry the scholarly torch forward.” At the same time, Ray wrote extensive comments on Engle’s drafts and strongly supported his Fulbright application. “I was lucky to have been hired by Ray,” Engle concluded.

Ray imposed a similar discipline on his own work. During his years at FAU, he staked out a wide-ranging and ambitious research agenda that made him one of the leading practitioners of urban history. He was engaged in fruitful projects with Kenneth W. Goings focused on African Americans in the city, and with Arnold R. Hirsch, where they sought to widen and deepen their understanding of federal programs in fostering development of the Second Ghetto. In 1993, Ray published his remarkably insightful “Race and Space” essay in an anthology that he and Arnie edited. Ray’s earlier interest in history from the bottom up had merged with his search for the policy origins of Interstate-95 and the mid-1960s destruction of Miami’s Overtown, an African American area that bordered downtown. Overtown’s mostly poor residents, Ray determined, lacked the organization and the political legitimacy that were prerequisite to turning aside the oncoming bulldozers. “Race is central to American history,” Ray told an interviewer in 1996, “and it is certainly central to urban history.” In that sense, Overtown residents did not seem so different from Ray’s presentation of another group he had studied earlier, those white, mostly poor, heavy-drinking, and unorganized residents of Gary, Indiana’s “Patch.”

At this stage in his career, Ray worked conceptually along three lines—first, that of Chicago sociologists such as William I. Thomas and Florian W. Znaniecki’s 1920s concept of the immigrant as poor and unorganized; second, during the 1970s to the early 1990s, Ray took explicit account of autonomy and agency among those seeking to secure a modest place in urban social and political affairs. Here was where Ray talked in several excellent essays about black defense organizations, ethnic churches and newspapers, and parochial schools. And third, starting in the 1990s, Ray took considerable and fruitful interest in politics and public policy in shaping urban social structures and built environments. Fostering new and innovative research in urban history, he also served as general editor of the Interdisciplinary Urban Studies Series by Kennikat Press that published twenty-five volumes between 1974 and 1983.

Also during his incredibly fruitful years at FAU, Ray played a vital role in the creation of a new scholarly journal dedicated to the study of urban history. David R. Goldfield, Blaine A. Brownell, and Ray were all “present at the creation,” which took place in the Fall of 1972 at the Diplomat Hotel in Hollywood, Florida, host of the Southern Historical Association’s annual meeting. Yet Ray could justly be called the “founder” of the Journal of Urban History, Brownell remembered. During a lively dinnertime conversation, the three young historians discovered they had all independently concluded that the emerging field of urban history required its own journal. (Only The Urban History Group Newsletter, published then at the University of Wisconsin–Milwaukee by historian A. Theodore Brown, existed as a modest approximation of what they had in mind.) They left Hollywood, Florida, with no firm plans but with a renewed sense of the need for such a journal.

In the Spring of 1973, Ray made the initial contact with Sage Publications, which already published a number of social science journals with urban themes. Sage editors enthusiastically agreed to publish a journal of urban history and asked Ray to be the editor. He initially declined but, hopeful of receiving institutional support from FAU, later agreed to take on the assignment. In short order, Ray signed the contract as the first editor and recruited the charter members of the editorial board. Many established scholars expressed grave reservations about the venture at first,
fearing that a new journal would “fragment” the “broader sweep of social and economic history,” but Ray and his sidekicks held firm. The first issue appeared on time in November 1974, a testament to Ray’s willingness to shoulder almost the entire load by himself.

In the early years, Ray’s tenure as editor necessarily took on the trappings of a one-man operation. The administration granted him partial access to a secretary from another academic department, who occasionally typed some correspondence, but he usually ended up stuffing envelopes himself. Receiving no help from student assistants, Ray handled such mundane tasks as photocopying and carrying bulk mailings and packages to and from the campus post office. He also singly completed the necessary editorial work of reading and evaluating manuscripts, copyediting, proofreading, and checking footnotes in the library. Not surprisingly, he later observed, his own scholarly productivity slowed noticeably as he struggled to launch the journal successfully. When he stepped down as editor after four frantic years, Ray laughed, “I was worn out.”

Ray, Blaine, and David made a series of crucial decisions that launched the journal on a successful path. Determined not to compromise on quality by publishing hastily rewritten seminar papers, they set standards high for the acceptance of submissions—despite the fact, remembered Brownell, that “this new publication had no ‘status’ in the field and the editors were not exactly household names.” Aiming for a broad audience and declining to reserve the journal’s pages for the publication of articles on U.S. urban history alone, they sought contributions from scholars around the globe. They opted for lengthy and meaty historiographical essays, scholarly contributions in their own right, rather than book reviews. Finally, at Ray’s suggestion, the journal included as a recurring feature interviews with leading urban historians ably conducted by Bruce Stave. That first issue included an essay by Samuel P. Hays and an interview with Sam Bass Warner, Jr. After serving as editor from 1973 to 1977, during which time the fledgling journal steadily gained in readership and prestige, he served as associate editor from 1977 to 1995 and thereafter as a member of the editorial board. But after the initial four years of nonstop editorial work, Ray sought broader intellectual horizons.

Teaching in other nations reinforced Ray’s location preferences and his ideas about American institutions and the American acculturation process. Between 1978 and 1990, the Fulbright committee invited Ray to teach at universities located in Tel Aviv, Perth, and Göttingen. Perth was lovely, he recalled, but lacked connections up and down Australia’s west coast. With his teaching responsibilities completed, he drove between Australia’s larger east coast cities, enjoying the beaches and conversations with locals. Göttingen’s students were at the center of a nationwide strike aimed at winning larger stipends, a situation that partly offended Ray’s American sense of student responsibility.

The history department at Tel Aviv University proved Ray’s best fit. Israel in 1978 was “the most exciting year of his life,” he told Tel Aviv colleague Robert Rockaway. “Ray saw Israel as a kind of laboratory,” Rockaway added. The nation’s many immigrants “made a deep impression.” Ray never mentioned which ideas in particular transferred from his Israeli Fulbright. Years later, however, he continued to reminisce about that experience in warm terms. As well, Israel’s vibrancy set a standard that Ray judged unattainable at FAU or even in fast-growing Boca Raton.

In 1990 and 1991, Ray taught at Florida State’s London Center and at the University of New Orleans with his good friend Arnie Hirsch. On his return to FAU, he advised close colleagues of his desire to move to another university with a livelier intellectual environment. In the plainest terms, Ray had determined that FAU no longer provided opportunities for scholarly growth.

In 1996, Ray joined the history faculty at the University of Alabama at Birmingham where he taught until his retirement eighteen years later. He served as chair of the history department until 2002. In 2004, Ray published his remarkable “Stop the Road: Freeway Revolts in Postwar American Cities” in the Journal of Urban History. Opposition to freeway building in cities such as 1960s Baltimore, Ray determined, “sprang up to defend neighborhoods against the . . . bulldozers] rolling through cities.” Often, Ray learned, the “struggle pitted grassroots citizen
organizations against the state and federal highway engineer and administrators.” Later in their battle, those same Baltimore activists “sought the intervention of political leaders or used legal challenges to halt highway projects.” Whether at the start or conclusion of 1960s-era anti-highway movements, Ray concludes, “Politics was always in the driver’s seat.” In February 2015, “Stop the Road” ranked fourth on the *Journal of Urban History*’s list of most cited articles.

In his 2012 *Journal of Policy History* essay, “The Expressway Teardown Movement in American Cities,” Ray brought the Interstate era into our contemporary moment. The near sovereign highway engineers of the 1950s and 1960s no longer held sway, Ray contended. In cities such as Milwaukee, mayors, downtown business leaders, and citizens’ organizations coalesced to tear down portions of the downtown Interstate road. Advocates of Jane Jacobs’s–style urban restoration emphasized the idea of reestablishing community ties that elevated highways had extinguished decades earlier. With the decentralization of highway politics under 1991 federal legislation, citizens groups in every region potentially enjoyed enhanced authority. Access to the Internet augmented activists’ ability to convert virtual political movements into real ones, Ray wisely observed. In this essay, Ray shifted slightly toward his earlier focus on citizen agency, provided that federal legislators had cleared the legal and legislative paths for their subsequent successes.

Ray made one more conceptual turn. During the especially productive summer of 2011, Ray and Mark Rose coedited an issue of the *Journal of Planning History* and prepared the third edition of Rose’s *Interstate: Highway Politics and Policy since 1939*. Naturally, the updated and revised edition dealt with racialized politics, community destruction, and heavy-handed engineers. As for the downtown and the Interstate, the authors could not help but notice that even among teardown advocates, the faith persisted that with just one more turn of the engineering and political screws, it remained possible to restore the Central Business District to its former rank as a first-class place to shop, live, and have fun. No one, it seemed, could escape their city’s history and politics, including the hard and fast conviction that downtown represented both a special place to gather for business and pleasure and one of the few areas in which it remained possible to boost property values and city revenues quickly.

All of Ray’s scholarly work reflected the immutable connections between past and present, which added an important public history dimension to his career. In 1995, he testified before the U.S. Commission on Civil Rights about the state of race relations in Miami, and he served as an expert witness in important housing and election litigation in Dade County, Florida. He wrote more than two dozen articles on Miami’s black history for the city’s African American newspaper *The Miami Times*, which convinced him that “the urban historian can have an educational impact far beyond the classroom.” His article on the expressway teardown movement, he discovered, provided inspiration to the activists involved in the Re-think 20/59 organization that challenged the Alabama Department of Transportation’s plan for rebuilding a bigger expressway through downtown Birmingham; he joined the group as a scholar-activist. “All of this suggests,” Ray mused, “that my kind of history might have some significance in the modern world.”

As he neared the end of a long career, declining health slowed Ray’s rapid rate of publication. Still, early in 2015, he was proud of a recently published article on race relations in Miami and another article nearing publication on draconian legislation passed by the Alabama legislature to force migrants to leave the state. In those articles, Ray’s tone suggested a diminished hope for a quick and successful American accommodation to ethnic differences that he had taken from his Israeli experience. But if slowed by illness, Ray never abandoned his commitment to publishing. Nearing the conclusion of a spate of radiation treatments, he told doctors and visitors that he planned to live long enough to complete two books on Miami’s history. The essential Ray was always about writing history.

As well, Ray continued to exhibit the same traits that had defined his stature in the discipline for so long. As impressive as his work ethic was his generosity and willingness to share ideas and sources with other researchers. At a history meeting, he was as likely to be huddled
with a graduate student, a freshly minted PhD, or a beginning assistant professor as he was to be conferring with a senior scholar. He went out of his way to support newcomers to urban history. “Ray read and gave me comments on my book from his hospital bed!” recalled Connolly. “Great comments too.”

Ray relaxed at times, we think. Sai Sai, Ray’s lovely wife and best friend, encouraged that side of him. Ray adored and admired Sai, a medical doctor from China who conducted research at the University of Alabama at Birmingham. As well, Ray loved and admired Sai’s daughter Long Lin equally with his children, California construction contractor Raymond Jack and Texas-based tax accountant Nancy. Sai also encouraged Ray to abandon German and Eastern European cooking for Asian fare. To hear about Ray’s trips to visit Sai’s family in China was to hear about family as well as gastronomic excursions. In his final year, Sai was a devoted helpmate.

At the close of forty-seven years in higher education, Ray could look back with pride on a career as a prolific scholar, dedicated teacher, and avid defender of faculty rights. Although he never served in a history department at a “flagship” state university or elite private college, Ray thrived wherever he taught—and in the process, enhanced the intellectual climate at Indiana University Northwest, Florida Atlantic University, and the University of Alabama at Birmingham. Because of his modesty, many of Ray’s accomplishments went largely unnoticed except by those who had the opportunity to pore over his stunning *curriculum vitae*. Readers of the *Journal of Urban History* and members of the Urban History Association have benefited enormously from the pioneering work he completed in past decades. A gifted writer, distinguished historian, and excellent teacher, Ray left an indelible mark on the profession. We were honored to be his colleagues and friends.

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