



Ronald D. Cohen

August 3, 1940 - December 27, 2022

Ronald D. Cohen, age 82, of Gary, passed away December 27, 2022. He was born in Los Angeles, California on August 3rd, 1940. Ron was a graduate of the University of California, Berkeley and the University of Minnesota. He went on to serve as a professor of American History at Indiana University Northwest for more than three decades. Ron was an avid advocate for the city of Gary as well as a renowned historian of American folk music. He authored several books on the latter and was recognized for his contributions to the industry with a Grammy nomination in 2001.

Ron was preceded in life by parents Herman & Helen Cohen (Wasserstrom), brother Alan Cohen, and son Joshua Cohen. He is survived in life by wife Nancy Cohen (Skager), daughter Alysha (Gregg) Featherman and stepdaughters Danielle (Ryan) Maicki & Elizabeth (Jeremy) Moore, as well as grandchildren DeQuane Cohen, Eva Featherman Rocco & Jude Maicki, and Frankie & Nico Moore.

Memorial visitation for Ron will be Monday, January 2, 2023 from 2:00 p.m. until time of memorial service at 5:00 p.m., at Burns Funeral Home, 701 East 7th Street, Hobart, Fr. Charles Niblick officiating. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Northwest Indiana Food Bank, 6490 Broadway, Merrillville, IN 46410. www.burnsfuneral.com.

Previous Events

Memorial Visitation

JAN 2. 2:00 PM - 5:00 PM (CT)

Burns Funeral Home - Hobart
701 E. 7th Street
Hobart, IN 46342
(219) 942-1117
info@burnsfuneral.com
<https://www.burnsfuneral.com/>

Memorial Service

JAN 2. 5:00 PM (CT)

Burns Funeral Home - Hobart
701 E. 7th Street
Hobart, IN 46342
(219) 942-1117
info@burnsfuneral.com
<https://www.burnsfuneral.com/>

Tribute Wall

KB

“ Ron Cohen was a magical person who believed in me. I came from a toxic family and love was very scarce. Ron showed me that there are truly good people in the world. He talked to me and he made me feel like there was someone left who cared and believed in me, and there is no way to repay the kindness and grace he afforded to me. A man once told me, “Ron helps people quietly,” and I can tell you he definitely helped me. He saved my life.

Kate B - October 12, 2025 at 08:48 PM

JA

“ Ron was such a wonderful mentor and friend, guiding me with my writing and being there when I needed him. I just learned of his passing and am so sad that we will never talk again. Please, Ron, rest in peace and enjoy whatever is next in your journey. Love Jane

Jane Ammeson - August 27, 2023 at 12:25 AM



“ I am just today learning of the death of Ron Cohen. He was a wonderful historian and an extremely generous mentor for my books *Folk Singers & the Bureau & Whole World in an Uproar*. My condolences to all his friends and family.

Aaron Leonard - August 23, 2023 at 02:54 PM

JW

“ Joseph Wright lit a candle in memory of Ronald D. Cohen



Joseph Wright - March 26, 2023 at 07:49 PM

JW

Enjoy the Stars Ron ! Thank you for being a friend and teacher !

Joseph Wright - March 26, 2023 at 07:50 PM

MK

“ *I will miss Ron deeply. He was a not only a top-notch scholar but an extremely generous and supportive person, a model of how to be a scholar, professor, and friend. His scholarship will live on in his books and his archives at the Southern Folklife Collection at the University of North Carolina in Chapel Hill, but I will greatly miss our email conversations. I send deepest condolences to Ron's family and friends and colleagues. He will be missed, but he will also be remembered and may his memory be a blessing. Michael Kramer*

Michael J. Kramer - February 25, 2023 at 04:18 PM

WD

“ *Ron Cohen enriched the lives of everybody. A truly nice, and gentle man. I was sorrowed to see his passing referenced in fb today. It is comforting to contemplate all of the caring he left within all those he loved, taught, and knew. RIP*

William Drozda - January 11, 2023 at 08:12 PM

MB

“ *Michelle Bearman lit a candle in memory of Ronald D. Cohen*



Michelle Bearman - January 09, 2023 at 10:07 AM

DP

“ Ron was one of my favorite patients and I looked forward to seeing him. We would sit in the exam room and talk long after he saw Dr. Venkat, he was a very interesting man. My deepest sympathies to Nancy and his family. I moved in November and just heard about his passing, otherwise I would have definitely been there. RIP Mr. Cohen

Deborah Partin - January 02, 2023 at 08:25 PM

CF

“ Carla Fischer lit a candle in memory of Ronald D. Cohen



Carla Fischer - December 30, 2022 at 05:23 AM

CF

“ Carla Fischer sent a virtual gift in memory of Ronald D. Cohen



Carla Fischer - December 30, 2022 at 05:00 AM

CF

RONALD was my cousin that I shared so many times with our families. He'll be with my memories forever. With love always and deep condolences to Nancy, Eva, Gregg, Alysha 🌸

Carla Fischer - December 30, 2022 at 05:12 AM

CF

I remember his laughter and wonderful sense of humor with compassion. I will always miss him.

Carla Fischer - December 30, 2022 at 05:15 AM

SF

We are saddened by the passing of Ron. Our thoughts and prayers go out to his family and friends at this sad time. May he Rest In Peace.

Sue Farag - January 02, 2023 at 05:11 PM

SM

“ *I am saddened by the passing of Ron Cohen and offer my deepest condolences to Nancy and the family. Unfortunately, I will be unable to attend the visitation, for I will be traveling at that time. Ron was an amazing person, and I was privileged to work with him for 38 years. Together with Jim Lane, we built one of the finest collections of historical materials in the nation, the Calumet Regional Archives at Indiana University Northwest. Along the way, Ron and I worked on a number of projects, highlighted by our co-editing the enormously popular book, Moonlight in Duneland. But when I think of Ron, I remember most his kindness, which he showed time and time again, from my first day on the job through my retirement from the Archives/University. The world is a much richer place because of Ron and a little emptier now. He will never be forgotten and his legacy will always be with us. I shall treasure the hundreds of memories of Ron and know many, many people feel the same way. You're the best, Boss! Steve McShane, Archivist/Curator, 1982-2020*

Stephen McShane - December 29, 2022 at 04:32 PM

JW

“ *Joseph Wright lit a candle in memory of Ronald D. Cohen*



Joseph Wright - December 29, 2022 at 12:33 PM

JW

“ *Ron was my professor at iun and a dear friend from Miller I always loved his classes and our talks. His love and passion for the history of the region was infectious! Ron will be deeply missed ! Enjoy the Stars Ron ! You will be remembered Forever.....Joe Wright*

Joseph Wright - December 29, 2022 at 12:33 PM

JO

“ *IUN, Lake CO, IN, the world and I were blessed with the influence of this wonderful man!*

I have always been in debt to Professor Cohen

He was a great friend to my parents, always gave me great confidence and advice and his positive attitude toward everything and everyone was really something to behold.

I personally witnessed his extraordinary ability to disarm hatred and distrust in his classroom with his tolerance and insight.

*With love,
John Oppman
1990 Truman Scholar, IN*

John Oppman - December 29, 2022 at 08:36 AM

DW

Ron had an encyclopedic knowledge of American folk music. His generous spirit and kindness will be remembered by many musicians and advocates of this music.

Dick Weissman - January 13, 2023 at 10:02 PM

DL

Ron Cohen was an amazing colleague at IU Northwest. He was always upbeat and carried a dry sense of humor. He was versatile, with extensive research from education to popular music. He was a truly remarkable scholar.

Diana Chen Lin - January 16, 2023 at 12:47 PM

RP

I am sorry to see this. I was a student of his at IUN in the late 80's. We would have cordial, spirited debates on the topics covered and I am a better person for it. 8 am classes were not for everyone but Professor Cohen and I looked forward to seeing each other to start our days. Ray Palmer

Ray Palmer - February 14, 2023 at 12:50 PM