



Ronald H. Spector

January 17, 1943 - March 26, 2026

Ronald Spector passed away on Thursday, March 26th following a battle with cancer. He was at home and surrounded by family. Ron was born in Pittsburgh in 1943 and is survived by his wife of over 55 years and fellow Pittsburgher, Dianne as well as his sons Daniel (Amy) and Jonathan (Molly), four grandchildren, Noah, Maisie, Hannah and Benji, sister Carol and brother Richard.

Ron received his B.A. from Johns Hopkins and PhD in history from Yale University. After completing his PhD in 1967, he was promptly drafted where he served in the U.S. Marine Corps from 1967 to 1969 including thirteen months in Vietnam. He was later commissioned in the Marine Corps Reserve and retired as a Lieutenant Colonel.

Ron taught for two years at LSU then came to Washington, DC to work at the U.S. Army Center of Military History. He also served as Director of Naval History, from 1986 to 1989 the first civilian (and the first Marine) to hold this position. From 1990 until his retirement in 2020 he was a Professor of History and International Relations at George Washington University.

Ron was the author of eight books, the best known of which is *Eagle Against the Sun: The American War With Japan* which won the Theodore and Franklin Roosevelt Prize and was a New York Times Bestseller. Over 40 years after its

publication, it is still considered the definitive one-volume history of WWII's Pacific Theater. He was a Fulbright Visiting Professor in India, Singapore and Israel. He also taught in Japan, the Naval Academy and the Army War College.

He will be deeply missed by his family, friends, and generations of students he mentored.

Upcoming Events

Graveside Service

SEP 4. 9:00 AM (ET)

Arlington National Cemetery
1 Memorial Drive
Arlington, VA 22211

Previous Events

Funeral Service

MAR 29. 11:00 AM (ET)

Agudas Achim Congregation
2908 Valley Drive
Alexandria, VA 22302
<https://agudasachim-va.org/>

Tribute Wall

YG

“ I am devastated to learn of Dr. Spector's passing. I was his research assistant when I was at GW and he opened so many doors for me. I am so sorry for the family's loss. He was a scholar and a gentleman and I will carry him in my heart and in my memory for all my days. May his memory always be a blessing.



Yana Ginburg - April 22 at 10:26 AM

TM

“ Dr. Spector was my faculty advisor at GW and someone I turned to long after graduation for career advice. I recommend his books to all of my colleagues and will always remember his mentorship. He left this world a better place.

Tara McCarthy - April 10 at 04:24 PM

BR

“ To Diane and the boys, I treasured my time as your friend and neighbor in the row houses on Woodbine off Quaker Lane in the early 1970s. I still have hanging on the wall of my study the mirror cloth you brought me from your year in India and the autographed book *Eagle Against the Sun*. I live with my husband, David Allen, in Columbia, MO, and how often I have tried to look up you and Ron....know that I cared deeply about our brief friendship when I was so young and vulnerable. Barbara Keith Rothschild

Barbara Keith Rothschild - April 09 at 07:43 PM

SM

“ I just saw the obit for a dear friend Ron going back to the 1970sMy sympathies to Diane and the boys....we last met before covid I guess. Fond memories of living as neighbors basically in Delhi in 1977-78 on Fulbrights with our kids in local schools, sharing the ups and downs of that experience....we stayed in touch and worked on various projects....remember a meal with diana at vietnamese restaurant in virginia??? diane please send me an email so I can send you a note...steve mackinnon srjrm@yahoo.com

steve mackinnon - April 09 at 01:55 PM

LU

“ We are so very sorry to hear of Ron’s passing. Many years ago we met on a couple of occasions with Edie and Kawin and once in Norfolk - all most enjoyable times. May his memory be for a blessing; with deepest sympathy; Ron will be sorely missed. Jim and Lois Ullman, Williamsburg, VA

Lois Ullman - March 28 at 07:40 PM

BL

“ The world is a lesser place. I will miss our calls, visits, and emails which invariably included his bone-dry humour and gimlet-eyed observations of the world. He started as my professor but over the years became my true and supportive friend; cheering me on and celebrating my wins, worrying over my challenges. Sharing his family with me has been one of the joys of my life, and I offer my deepest condolences.

Beth Loughney - March 28 at 03:39 PM

ST

“ He will be missed. He added value character and grace to the GW community. Steve Trachtenberg

stephen trachtenberg - March 28 at 11:10 AM