



## Roger Elliott Koontz

May 21, 1940 - January 12, 2021

Roger Elliott Koontz, May 21, 1940 - January 12, 2021 died peacefully in his sleep in Bloomfield, CT.

Roger grew up in the farming area of central Illinois, in the small town of Fithian. His father was the principal of the consolidated high school, and the family lived on the school grounds. He and his brother went to the local one-room schoolhouse. In high school, football and basketball were mandatory activities, and Roger played both, but he also excelled academically, and was awarded a National Merit Scholarship.

Choosing the nearby University of Illinois, he entered college with a major in physical chemistry. By the time he graduated, his interests had changed significantly. Inspired by John F. Kennedy's "Ask not ...," he decided chemistry was not the most useful thing he could do for his country. He went to Yale Law School because he thought it would lead to a more meaningful career.

After graduation, his first position, in 1965, was with the New Haven Legal Assistance Association as an attorney in the Hill neighborhood. Several years later he became Executive Director of Connecticut Legal Services, which incorporated most of the previously existing programs in the state. As environmental issues began to attract attention in the late 1970s, Roger's interests shifted again, this time to the emerging field of environmental law. He joined the Boston-based Conservation Law Foundation in 1980 as its

Connecticut counsel. And in 1983 he and another legal services lawyer, David Silverstone, formed a partnership to practice environmental law in Hartford. When they dissolved the firm in 2001, Roger briefly joined Tyler Cooper & Alcorn. In 2002 he became the Connecticut representative for Environment Northeast (now the Acadia Center), retiring in 2010, and celebrated for his mentoring and expertise in sustainable energy policy.

Golf was one of the passions of his life. He began playing in law school, and the Yale Course remained his home course for many years. He was also a talented woodworker, crafting furniture and even building a period-appropriate addition to his 1850s house in Chester, Connecticut. He was a lover of the arts, with a wide range of musical tastes and great admirer of professional dance, and of getting outside, hiking, canoeing, fishing, and bird watching. And he was an outstanding cook, notorious for his flourless chocolate torte and his baguettes. His family remembers him as being exceptional at everything he did -- but mostly as being incredibly kind and loving.

He leaves his two daughters, Christina (Matthew) White, and Stephanie Koontz (Charlie Radoslovich), four grandchildren, Peter and Dan White and Ben and Ella Radoslovich; and his wife of forty-two years, Michelle Press. He was preceded in death by his brother Steve, sister Janet and parents, Wayne Koontz and Rebecca Elliott Koontz.

A memorial service will be planned in the months ahead. Donations can be made in his memory to Doctors Without Borders or The Nature Conservancy.

# Tribute Wall

SH

“ As my memories allow, Roger was indeed a good friend and brother at Phi Kappa Tau Fraternity , University of Illinois. We enjoyed similar passions. He was really "smart" in academics. I followed to Yale one year after Roger did. On coming to New Haven, he shared a "sofa" in his apartment allowing me time to secure a place to live . Nice man !

At Christmas time, 1963 I took my "Hot Edsel and together we drove to Illinois. It was cold, but we made it in one day. Sensible conversations consumed all the way, to and back. What a man , full of wisdom and knowledge . God bless his family

Stephen J. Hanover

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**Stephen John Hanover** - January 31, 2021 at 07:28 AM

CS

“ Dear Michelle,

*Please accept my heartfelt condolences. Roger was a special person, quiet and unassuming and also very smart. He was so humble about his legal career. I admired that about him.*

*Moreover, I will never forget the wonderful Thanksgiving dinner you and Roger hosted at Duncaster. It meant a lot to me as well as my mom to be included. That joyful dinner is one of my favorite Thanksgivings-such warmth and friendship the two of you shared. What a gift to those of us who attended!*

*I will keep you in my thoughts and prayers. Carolyn Spencer*

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**Carolyn Spencer** - January 18, 2021 at 06:21 PM

AB

“ Roger was very special to me. His gentle manner, kindness and compassion came through in all of our conversations. How proud he was of his girls was a constant reminder of how important family is. Our conversations were meaningful and inspired purpose. It has been many years since I have seen Roger, however there are some you won't forget. Rest In Peace. Andrea Bednarz, AKA, Brown Eyed Girl. Chester

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**Andrea Bednarz** - January 17, 2021 at 09:40 AM