



## Dr. Joseph Harris Rubinstein Ph.D.

October 5, 1936 - June 8, 2024

Dr. Joseph Harris Rubinstein (1936-2024) passed away at the age of 87 on June 8, 2024. He met Heike Büchler, the love of his life, while working in New York City and living in Yonkers. He liked to say he came home to his friends throwing a party and found Heike sitting in his favorite chair. They were married for 55 years.

Joe grew up on the Lower East Side of Manhattan with his sister Judy and parents Morris and Anne Rubinstein, both immigrants from Eastern Europe. His father was a physician, and his mother a homemaker, both huge influences on his life. Joe attended the Rabbi Jacob Joseph Yeshiva and Stuyvesant High School. He had many amazing stories from his childhood, from roaming the streets of NYC in the 1940s and challenging his parents with his independent personality. At age 18, Joe joined the Army for three years before returning to New York City. Then ready to pursue academics, he earned a B.A., M.S., and Ph.D. in biology from New York University, completing his studies in 1969. During this time, Joe also did basic research in biochemistry and physiology at the Boyce Thompson Institute for Plant Research. After graduating, Joe stayed in New York City and helped develop the Conceptually Oriented Program in Elementary Science (COPES) at New York University.

In 1972, Joe joined Open Court Publishing Company in LaSalle-Peru, Illinois.

He served as a director of their math and science curriculum and he co-authored the Real Math program, an elementary and middle school math curriculum that used a new approach for learning math from real-world experiences. The Real Math textbooks were used in schools nationwide for over 40 years.

In 1984, Joe joined the faculty of Coker College in Hartsville, South Carolina, where he chaired the Education department for most of his 27-year tenure, retiring in 2011. Joe grew the department and started an evening education program providing adult students access to education. During his tenure at Coker, Joe advocated fiercely for improving education on a statewide level. Individual students were always his top priority. Even after retirement, Joe loved interacting with students, walking the college grounds, and attending college functions. His passion for teaching and for his students was never-ending. He often said if he taught one student one useful thing on any given day, that was a good day. He always saw potential in his students and worked tirelessly to help them find and achieve their life's dreams.

Joe loved a good discussion and was known for championing positions that might be overlooked. There was never a political topic that Joe did not enjoy discussing. While he often held differences in opinion, he always respected the views of others. His goal was not to change someone's mind but to understand differences. Joe believed there was inherent goodness in the world. He was without judgment of humanity with all its flaws and instead embraced differences in people. He opposed all wars and military intervention.

Joe's intellectual interests were vast. He collected rare books, often jumping up mid-conversation to pull a book off a shelf that aligned with the interests of his visitor. Keep it, he would say with a warm smile. He was well-read on many topics, from Judaic history to literature to politics. Joe took on the role of family historian and genealogist for the extended Rubinstein family. Joe had a

keen mind with regard to investing and provided advice and education to all in his life. He enjoyed playing chess and Scrabble.

Above all, he fiercely loved his family. Joe's love for Heike was unwavering. Joe was a dedicated and loving father to Mark and Sara. He provided endless encouragement and support to his family in all their endeavors. He took a special interest in Mark's biomedical research, taking time to read his publications and discuss ongoing laboratory efforts. He was very proud of Sara's photography career. The adventures and growth of his three grandchildren brought him much joy. Whether a South Carolina beach vacation with immediate family or a reunion with the extended family, spending time with relatives was always most important to Joe.

Joe was a large personality and an undeniable force in the Rubinstein family. He is survived by his wife, Heike Büchler Rubinstein; son, Mark Rubinstein (Anastasia); daughter, Sara Rubinstein-Case (Thomas Case); grandchildren, Oliver, Sylvia, and Tighe; sister, Judy Prigal, and her family. He is endlessly missed.

A funeral service will be held on Sunday, June 16, 2024, from 12:30 PM to 1:15 PM at Schwartz Brothers-Jeffer Memorial Chapels, 114-03 Queens Blvd, Forest Hills, NY 11375. Immediately following, there will be a burial service from 1:30 PM to 2:30 PM at Union Field Cemetery, 82-11 Cypress Ave, New York, NY 11385.

A reception in his honor will be held from 5:00 until 7:00 pm on Sunday, July 14, 2024, at The Drengaelen House, Coker College, 210 E. Home Avenue, Hartsville, SC.

In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to the Coker University Rubinstein-

Büchler Endowed Scholarship for International Study. ([www.coker.edu/offices-services/office-of-advancement](http://www.coker.edu/offices-services/office-of-advancement))

# Cemetery Details

**Private**

# Previous Events

## Reception

JUL 14. 5:00 PM - 7:00 PM (ET)

Drengaelen House at Coker College  
210 E. Home Ave.  
Hartsville, SC

# Tribute Wall

ST

“ *Dr. Rubinstein was a great professor and individual. He will truly be missed! My family and I send our deepest condolences.* ”



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**Shemel Thomas** - July 29, 2024 at 04:47 AM

AG

“ *Dr. Rubinstein was one of my two advisors at Coker, and he will be truly missed. Please accept my warmest condolences. I'm truly sorry for your loss.* ”



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**Amy Gibson** - July 14, 2024 at 02:17 PM

MC

“ *He was my favorite professor. I will always remember his walking on top of the table to get our attention. He will be missed but his teachings will live on.* ”

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**Michele Crowley** - July 11, 2024 at 11:11 AM

MP

“ *Marla Prozzi lit a candle in memory of Dr. Joseph Harris Rubinstein Ph.D.* ”



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**Marla Prozzi** - June 17, 2024 at 04:32 AM

LM

“ Dear Heike, Mark, Sara and family-  
We are thinking about you all today. We are so sorry for your loss.  
We hope you hear many amazing shared stories of love for Joe  
from others that you can hold with your own dear memories.  
We love you all.  
The Mosca Family (Gerda, Mike, Lisa and Tina)

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**Lisa Mosca** - June 16, 2024 at 10:50 AM

MZ

“ What a GREAT MAN.

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**Madge Zemp** - June 16, 2024 at 09:17 AM

WB

“ Lieber Joe, ich bin traurig, dass du uns verlassen musstest. Deine  
sympathische freundliche Art, deine kluge pragmatische  
Herangehensweise an Aufgaben aller Art haben mir stets imponiert.  
Du wirst uns fehlen.  
Farewell mein lieber Schwager.  
Wolfgang



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**Wolfgang Büchler** - June 15, 2024 at 04:18 PM

AL

“ Mr. Rubenstein was a great neighbor to everyone in Peru IL in the early 1980s especially the kids. We all would hang out at their house and he was incredible with us. Many educational discussions and trips to Starve Rock Park for wildly fun hikes. He was so very generous in every way and really tried to make us better people. Mark, Sara, and Mrs Rubenstein I'm so very sorry.

Andy Langham - June 15, 2024 at 12:58 PM

GO

“ So sorry for your loss. Coker has indeed lost such a legacy. My prayers are with you as you find comfort in the days ahead. Always reflect back on the memories you cherished with Dr. R, they will last a lifetime.



Grady L O'Neal - June 13, 2024 at 11:15 PM

JB

“ Joanna Leigh Britt lit a candle in memory of Dr. Joseph Harris Rubinstein Ph.D.



Joanna Leigh Britt - June 12, 2024 at 10:24 PM

JB

I had the pleasure taking care of Mr Joseph. The family are all in my thoughts and prayers 🙏. MR JOE I sure will miss you.

Joanna Leigh Britt - June 12, 2024 at 10:27 PM

DW

“ *Dianne Woodle lit a candle in memory of Dr. Joseph Harris Rubinstein Ph.D.*



**Dianne Woodle** - June 11, 2024 at 10:50 PM

RW

“ *Rebecca Walker lit a candle in memory of Dr. Joseph Harris Rubinstein Ph.D.*



**Rebecca Walker** - June 11, 2024 at 09:42 AM

KE

“ *Dr. Rubinstein was an amazing professor and friend. He always had a smile and a kind word for everyone. He will always be loved and missed.*

**Kimberly Edgerton** - June 11, 2024 at 07:45 AM

JK

“ *Dr. Rubinstein was a great teacher and mentor to all his students. He will be greatly missed by many!*



**Julie Kimrey** - June 10, 2024 at 09:47 PM

DP

“ *Deborah Willis Perry lit a candle in memory of Dr. Joseph Harris Rubinstein Ph.D.*



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**Deborah Willis Perry** - June 10, 2024 at 08:51 PM

JG

“ *Jewel Gibson lit a candle in memory of Dr. Joseph Harris Rubinstein Ph.D.*



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**Jewel Gibson** - June 10, 2024 at 07:23 PM

CT

“ *Cindy Taylor lit a candle in memory of Dr. Joseph Harris Rubinstein Ph.D.*



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**Cindy Taylor** - June 10, 2024 at 06:24 PM

LM

“ *I'm so sorry for your loss! I worked with Joe at Coker for many years. My prayers are with you.*

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**Lesla Mulligan** - June 10, 2024 at 05:09 PM

DG

“ So sorry to hear of your loss. My sincere condolences 🌸



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**Debra Gainey** - June 10, 2024 at 01:20 PM

ST

“ Shoba Turner lit a candle in memory of Dr. Joseph Harris Rubinstein Ph.D.



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**shoba Turner** - June 10, 2024 at 01:17 PM

JC

“ John Crawford lit a candle in memory of Dr. Joseph Harris Rubinstein Ph.D.



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**John Crawford** - June 10, 2024 at 11:09 AM

JP

“ Heike, I am so sorry to hear about the passing of Joe. He was one of my favorite professors and always so lovely to talk to. I enjoyed seeing you two walking, you had such a special glow together. Sending you love and hugs from Maine.

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**Jana (Longfellow) Pye** - June 10, 2024 at 06:30 AM

MF

*Mrs Heike. I am sorry to hear of.mr Joseph passing. My prayer and condolences goes out to you. Mark and Sara all the grands Nd.his sister. May God comfort you all during this time of loss he will be miss*

**Mrs C Flowers** - June 10, 2024 at 12:10 PM

TP

*“ He was technically retired by the time I came to his campus, but Joe was always a colleague. He was and is a true intellectual giant with a last impact on an institution and countless students.*

**Tracy Parkinson** - June 10, 2024 at 12:57 AM

CW

*“ Friend, mentor, great prof, Joe left an indelible mark on his friends, students, and the Coker community. I have very fond memories. My love and prayers are with you Heike, Mark, Sarah and family.*

**Cheryl W.** - June 09, 2024 at 09:39 PM

MR

*“ Heike I am so sorry to hear about your husband. Prayers are being sent up for you and the family.*



**Michelle Ratliff** - June 09, 2024 at 09:09 PM

GG

*“ Heinz and family, We are so sorry for your loss of Joe! You are in our thoughts and Prayers!*



**Gene and Teresa Gibson** - June 09, 2024 at 08:30 PM

RP

“ I will always be thankful that I was able to have Dr. Rubinstein as my professor. He was such a great person. Prayers for his family. A Coker legend!

Regina Parker - June 09, 2024 at 08:23 PM

SC

“ I am so sorry to hear of Dr. Rubinstein's passing. He was such a sweet man. He was one of the best bosses I ever had. Rest in peace.



Sandy Colston - June 09, 2024 at 08:19 PM

SO

“ Shannon Outlaw lit a candle in memory of Dr. Joseph Harris Rubinstein Ph.D.



Shannon Outlaw - June 09, 2024 at 08:08 PM

LH

Such a great professor! He taught me so much and I was a better math teacher because of him. I am so sorry for you.

Linda Horton - June 10, 2024 at 04:28 PM

LG

Comments on this site and on Coker's alumni pages say it all: Joe's enormous positive impact on the lives of students, colleagues, the community, and peers all over the state will remain a living monument to him. To those of us who worked with him, argued with him (to his great joy!), loved him--these comments are healing.

Lois Rauch Gibson - June 14, 2024 at 06:40 PM