Ross, Steven

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Steven Thomas Ross passed away peacefully on Sunday, August 12 in Newport, RI after a brief illness. He was 81.

A devoted husband and father, a distinguished scholar, a respected military historian, and a gifted teacher, Steve was the author of numerous articles and reviews and wrote eight books on military and diplomatic history including European Diplomatic History, 1789-1799; Quest for Victory: French Military Strategy, 1792-1799; From Flintlock to Rifle: Infantry Tactics, 1740-1866; and French Military History, 1661-1799: A Guide to the Literature. He was also a leading student of American war plans, editing a multi-volume collection of war plans and a three volume series analyzing the plans from 1890-1950.

He was a Phi Beta Kappa graduate of Williams College and held a Ph.D. from Princeton University. After several years in academia at the University of Nebraska and the University of Texas, Steve joined the faculty of the United States Naval War College where he taught in the Department of Strategy and Policy for 30 years. He held the William V. Pratt Chair in Military History.

He also served as a visiting professor at Yale University and Williams College, worked for the Defense Intelligence Agency as a military analyst and was a scholar-in-residence at the Central Intelligence Agency. His knowledge, enthusiasm for teaching and candor contributed to the education of three generations of military leaders. He was awarded the United States Navy Meritorious Civilian Service Award.

Steve was a dedicated and serious scholar, but he was also a raconteur and a great storyteller who was as comfortable talking to the "regulars" at Dunkin Donuts as he was discussing strategy and policy with admirals and senior government officials or chairing a panel of academics at an Ivy League symposium. He valued scholarship, he loved reading and research, and he wholeheartedly embraced the Williams College ethos of the life of the mind. In his 50th class reunion memoir, he wrote that he knew he wanted to be a historian from the age of eight and that he had taught for almost 50 years and loved every minute of it.

Steve was a member of the Board of Officers of Touro Synagogue in Newport, a Vice-President of Temple Shalom in Middletown, RI and for many years served as the chair of the Advisory Board of the Salvation Army of Newport.

He was the son of Ruth Berlin Ross and Michael Bakunin Ross and grew up in Hewlett, NY where he attended Woodmere Academy. He is survived by his wife Bea of Newport, his son Jay, his daughter-in-law Polina and his granddaughter Maya of Philadelphia, PA.

Donations may be made to Touro Synagogue or the Salvation Army of Newport.