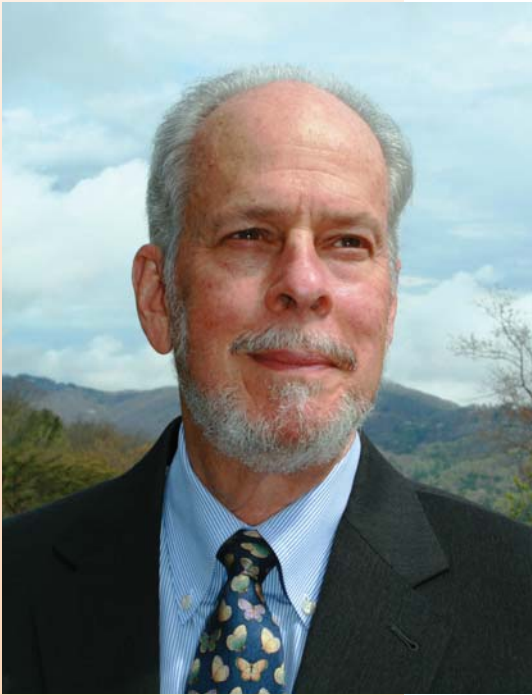


Ronald Manheimer



Redefining the meaning of retirement

Ronald J. Manheimer has spent his career guiding recent retirees on new paths of learning, relationships and involvement. He has enabled them to feel empowered to pursue unfulfilled hopes and expectations.

More than a PhD-trained philosopher and teacher, Ron had practical experience as a leader of lifelong learning opportunities and a life transition facilitator. Early in his career he discovered that when job opportunities arose and he was asked to start a new program, he always said yes – launching into the unknown rather than the known path. His success came from taking the approach: Go learn about it and go do it!

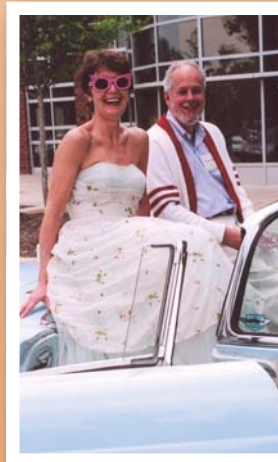


In graduate school Ron studied philosophy and human development, receiving a PhD from the Board of Studies in History of Consciousness, University of California, Santa Cruz, in 1973. While there he was fortunate to have future colleague Harry "Rick" Moody as his roommate. Says Ron, "Some of us have 'messengers' in our lives, people who bring ideas and opportunities to our attention, often unbidden ones. Rick has been one of those people for me. He was the one who suggested that I might enjoy teaching older adults which led to my first volunteer gig in Olympia, Washington, and he recommended me for a job at The National Council on Aging as director of older adult education (for which I was hired)." Rick served for a short time on NCCCR's National Advisory Board, which existed from 1989 to about 1995.

The Gurus of Creative Aging, Rick Moody (left) and Ron are pictured in front of Windsor Castle in England in 2012 near where they were attending a symposium on aging and spirituality.



Creative retirement is a notion found in cultures around the world. In many other countries, leaders have realized that their large populations of healthy older adults want to continue to be a vital part of society, and want to continue to learn. Ron Manheimer, Robert (Bob) Davis, and Denise Snodgrass traveled by invitation to Taiwan to present NCCCR's model for older adult programming at an international conference in 2008. Bob was then chair of the NCCCR's Steering Council, while Denise was assistant director of the center.



Thanks to innovators like Ron, we can now say we live in the era of creative aging. At OLLI newcomers find groups of learners contributing to the larger Asheville area community. The organization thrived under Ron's leadership, with adventurous programs like the College for Seniors, Leadership Asheville Seniors, and the Senior Academy for Intergenerational Learning. Some retirees moved to Asheville after experiencing one of the annual Creative Retirement Exploration Weekends. Pictured are Ron Manheimer and Denise Snodgrass at a 1950s theme party at the Reuter Center in 2008.

COMING TO UNC ASHEVILLE

Ron served in various posts in California and Washington state and as director of older adult education at The National Council on Aging in Washington, DC. In 1988, Ron received an offer he could not refuse. UNC Asheville's then chancellor David Brown wanted to develop a national model for creative retirement. Chancellor Brown had gone so far as to write a lengthy brochure detailing a wide array of program offerings – dreaming big about this brand new endeavor. Handing the brochure to Ron, Chancellor Brown simply said, "Let's try them all and see which ones work!" That set the tone for this ambitious and innovative program, and Ron became the first director of the North Carolina Center for Creative Retirement (NCCCR). The NCCCR was renamed the Osher Lifelong Learning Institute (OLLI) at UNC Asheville in 2012.

NCCCR flourished, incorporating Ron's philosophy on creative retirement and capturing his vision. By 1998, a space shortage led to the idea of building a structure solely to house NCCCR. With help from UNC Asheville's Board of Trustees, who provided 5.5 acres of campus land, and UNC Asheville's Development Office, a team of volunteers and NCCCR staff raised \$4.5 million for construction of a 20,000 square foot building. Named the Reuter Center, it opened in June of 2003. Ron had the vision and worked with others to make it a reality, never dreaming they could raise so much from individual contributions.

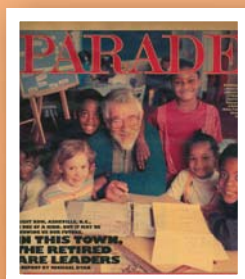
Today, Ron feels that the challenge at OLLI will be to serve an even larger number of constituents with diverse interests and learning styles. These participants have one thing in common: they see aging not as a time to avoid risk, but as a period of vibrancy and dreams realized.

EARLY LIFE

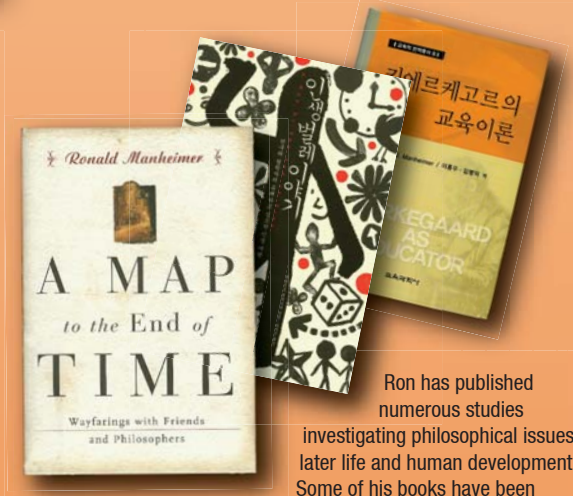
Born in 1943 and raised in Detroit, Ron graduated from Monteith College, an innovative, liberal arts college within Wayne State University. There he discovered people had the capacity to be their own teachers and to teach others. Ron traveled to Israel in the summer of 1966 and worked on a kibbutz. Wherever he lived, Ron became connected to the local Jewish community. In Asheville Ron developed programs for and



led the Center for Jewish Studies (CJS) at UNC Asheville as steering council chair. CJS is an organization that connects the Jewish community with the campus. Ron is pictured in 1966 in Coldwater, Michigan.



Articles in publications such as The New York Times gave NCCCR national recognition. The cover of *Parade* magazine brought the world to NCCCR. Six thousand letters poured in requesting information about the programs by people who wanted to participate and people who wanted to see centers modeled after NCCCR in their locations.



Ron has published numerous studies investigating philosophical issues of later life and human development. Some of his books have been translated into Chinese and Korean. Ron's first published book was *Kierkegaard As Educator* (University of California Press, 1977). When Ron edited the *Older Americans Almanac*, he collaborated with NCCCR participants.

