

## Ruth Hege Howes

Ruth Hege Howes, Ph.D., Professor Emerita, Ball State University, passed away peacefully, surrounded by family, in Santa Fe, New Mexico, on April 29, 2025, at the age of 80.



Ruth was born in Montpelier, Vermont, on October 18, 1944, and she grew up in Greensboro, North Carolina. For her last two years of high school, she attended Northfield Mount Hermon in Massachusetts. She went on to pursue her undergraduate degree in physics at Mount Holyoke College, where she met her beloved husband of 59 years, Bob, on a blind date.

After graduating in 1965, she joined Bob at Columbia University, where she received her Ph.D. in Physics and Astronomy, specializing in Mössbauer spectroscopy under the direction of Nobel candidate Chien-Shiung Wu. She went on to teach Physics and Astronomy at Ball State University in Muncie, Indiana, for 27 years, becoming the George and Frances Ball Professor of Physics.

Inspired by Dr. Wu, throughout her career Ruth was passionate about recognizing the achievements of women in science. She wrote the book *Their Day in the Sun: The Women of the Manhattan Project* with Caroline Herzenberg. She and Caroline found and interviewed more than 300 women who had worked as scientists on the Manhattan Project. Ruth and Caroline also wrote *After the War: Women in Physics in the United States*. Earlier in her career, Ruth co-authored *Women in the Use of Military Force* with Michael Stephenson. She also authored over 109 articles. In her efforts to promote nuclear arms control, she took a break from teaching to work at the U.S. State Department in the Arms Control and Disarmament Agency (ACDA), and she was an NSF science advisor to Senator Ted Kennedy.

Close to her heart was Ruth's desire to see more girls enter math and science. She helped create the teaching video "Physics at the Indy 500" with racecar driver Tony Bettenhausen. She worked on Strategic Programs for Innovation in Undergraduate

Physics (SPIN-UP), a national group of physicists working to encourage more undergraduates to study physics. This led to her becoming the Chair of Physics at Marquette University in Milwaukee, Wisconsin, before she retired to Santa Fe, New Mexico, in 2008.

In Santa Fe, she continued her efforts to help more students overcome their fear of math and science by tutoring at Santa Fe Community College and Capital High School in the Santa Fe Public Schools system. She passionately believed in her students' abilities and maintained that "stupid math errors" did not mean you couldn't succeed in math and science. She also judged local science fairs and volunteered at the Food Depot. For pleasure, she liked to read mystery novels, hike, and work on remodeling the house.

Ruth was a caring mother, wife, and friend. We are lucky to have had her love and support for so many years. She is survived by her husband and daughters, Rachel and Prudence. In lieu of flowers, the family suggests supporting The Food Depot and Enchanted Sky Hospice. To plant trees in memory, please visit the Sympathy Store.

Source: *Sante Fe New Mexican*, 03/21/2026.

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