

Axel Schonfeld

MAY 30, 2021

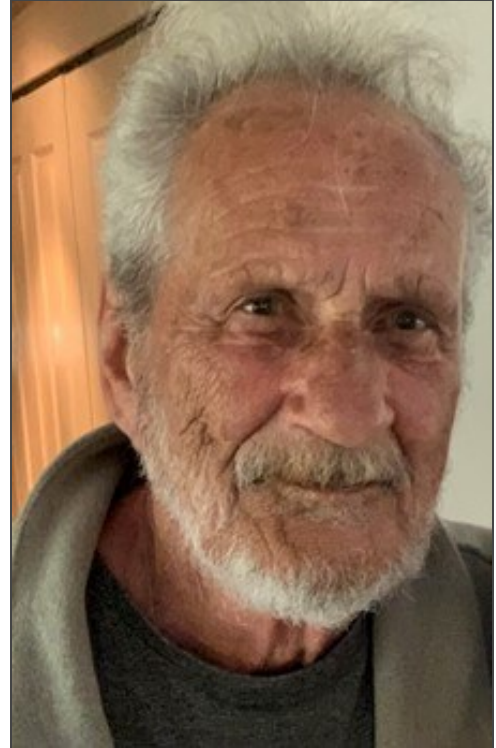
It is with heavy hearts that we announce the passing of our Dad, Axel Schonfeld.

Axel was very recently diagnosed with terminal lung cancer. At his request, on May 30, 2021, at close to 12:00pm, he left us, peacefully, in our backyard and enveloped in deep and profound love from his family. He was 76.

Axel was a design genius. He wasn't just creative; it was part of who he was. He was a photographer and graphic designer and had a love affair with aluminum, wood, and steel. His home, and many homes of his family and friends, contain his creations; minimalist industrial clocks and light fixtures, aluminum tables, shelves and engineered staircases.

Born in Tramnitz, Germany, Axel came to Canada when he was 10 years old. Throughout his life, he lived and worked in Vancouver, Toronto, New York, Long Beach California, and Michigan. Almost by accident he ended up "retiring" in Point Roberts, WA, where he continued to design and build. It was in Point Roberts where he found a simpler life; a love of hummingbirds and deer, wild blackberries, chopping wood, his dog Leo, and cats Gus and Millie. It was here where he found wonderful and meaningful friendships...and peace.

Axel loved to read, to write, to drink coffee, to converse and debate about politics, music, cinema, sports, art, architecture and society. Those who knew him would have enjoyed spirited and intelligent conversations about any and all; the merits of



Arthur Erikson, Frank Lloyd Wright, Georgia O’Keeffe, Rothko & Calder, to name a few. He would regularly get up at 5:00 am to watch English football (he was partial to Arsenal). If you spent a morning, afternoon or evening visiting Dad, you would have enjoyed a nice fire, eaten a perfect snack, and listened for hours to Dylan, Keith Jarret, Miles Davis & Pat Metheny. He loved scotch, Aquavit, ice cream, sautéed mushrooms, a good pen, a good font, sharp tools, bread with his butter, Scrabble, Solitaire, Birkenstocks...and bacon.

He was grateful and thankful and never one to impose. He liked irony. He made people laugh. He left a small footprint in terms of how he lived his life yet exuded a profound energy that many were drawn to. He was interested and interesting and he had a unique ability to engage and inspire others to be curious.

Axel lived thoughtfully, patiently, with purpose and without frivolity. He helped people because they needed help, not because he wanted something in return. He saw where he could be of service, and, in this way, he formed lasting relationships. He loved his family and they loved him back unconditionally.

The void he leaves is immeasurable. Pre-deceased by his mother Helen Zoellmer, his second wife and love Kate Austin, brother-in-law Allan Griffin (Christine McClymont) and nephew Matthew Griffin (Dana), Axel is survived by his son Sean Schonfeld (Tracy Rapanos), his daughter Noelle Mori (Dave), John Austin (Trish), his grandchildren Althea Kettlewell (Carson), Gabe (Alana), Nevaeh & Avery Mori, his first wife and lifelong friend Margaret, his dear friend Jann, his brother Klaus (Joy), nephews Kevin (Nicole), Blair, Darren (Crystal), Nick, brother-in-law Ray Griffin (Marion), Matt & Maggie, and the close friends he made in Point Roberts who meant the world to him.

The family would like to acknowledge and thank with special appreciation; Dr. Sean Bozorgzad at the Point Roberts Medical Clinic, and Point Roberts Fire Chief Chris Carleton, who both ensured Dad knew someone was looking out for him in

the last few months of his life.

"We mortals don't do well when faced with death. We tend to forget that life is but a journey towards an inevitable end. All we should really hope for is that we have a reasonably good time travelling, and that we don't upset too much of the scenery along the way."

Until we meet again, Dad.

Messages of Condolence

Beautifully said, I loved A as I called him, he has been a huge part of my life and business's none of which would have been what they are today without his Genius, I am forever grateful that we had the chance to visit a few years ago. Be strong and know he is here with us.

Tycoonette (as he called me)

— **Judy Montooth**

Beautifully written Noelle and Sean. I'm glad I got to know Axel a little bit for a little while, it was always nice to spend time with him.

A journey well travelled, love to you all.

— **John Laird**

Hi Dad....I needed to write to you after all of this. It's a month tomorrow that you came back home. Only one month. Sean and I could have written 20 pages about you and it wouldn't have been enough. I hope you are ok with what we came up with. It was straight from the heart. I wonder if you knew what kind of effect your death would have on us? Because if you did, good on you for not letting us know. I can tell you it's brutal...and each day I think I will adjust a little more...but it's not happening. Maybe in time (people keep telling me that it will become easier but I'm not so sure). What I wanted to tell you again...in case you forgot....is how much I love you and what a great Dad you were.

— **Noelle Mori**

Beautiful obituary. He was a friend to all of his neighbors in Point Roberts. We will all miss him, but I feel I have lost a close friend.

— **John Spinelli**

We enjoyed Axel's creativeness and personality when he was our Leica rep at Lens & Shutter so many years ago. We had lost touch after he left Vancouver and I I very much appreciated the thumbnail of his life after his departure from Vancouver.

— **Art Smolensky**

I knew Axel in high school in New Westminster where he already displayed his prodigious talent, his eye for images and design and his love of great books, great thinking, and good food. He also enjoyed card games! I am sorry we lost touch and sad to read of his passing. He was special. My sincerest condolences to his family.

— **Angelika Waber (Ottho)**

To Margaret and family,
Pieter & I extend our condolences in the passing of Axel. Margaret hopefully you might remember Pieter & I, we had the pleasure of working with Axel many, many years ago at Kits Cameras. Axel was indeed one of our most unforgettable people. He was a kind, gentle man, and always full of energy, a wonderful person to work with. I acquired much information about many different subjects in our joint interests, knowledge and debates as we three shared a common interest in photography, art, drafting, and business management. Sadly we all lost touch after your move to Toronto however. We both often thought of you all wondering just where life had taken you. We must thank whoever wrote Axel's eulogy, it was well expressed, capturing the essence which was "Axel".

Pieter & Waita Bates/Klapwijk

— **Pieter Klapwijk**

Dear Pieter and Waita.. I wanted to thank you for your condolences and memories of Axel..

Axel's son Sean and daughter Noelle wrote Axel's obituary..and I think they captured Axel in a way that will be remembered by all who knew him. Axel was always so proud of Sean and Noelle .. and their last tribute to their dad gives a glimpse of what Axel meant to them..

— **Margaret Schonfeld**

The Eagle has finally landed...

— **Karen Waine**

We have been slow to write this as it remains difficult to realize that our good friend is gone. Almost every week during the past year has included a visit and long talk with Axel. We first met Axel when he moved next door to our cabin in Point Roberts some nine years ago. He was a splendid character that few individuals can measure up to. With Leo by his side, they would make the rounds and we would chat. In our first year, it was a cordial neighbourly relationship chatting about life on the Point and common issues surrounding our properties. Axel was a wonderful neighbour but he was also a great friend. We soon shared coffee, baked goods and made fires, very large fires and burned much wood. Axel had a love of unsalted butter, fine scotch, good coffee and baked sweets. He would quip about his fridge being well stocked with over 10 pounds of butter - just in case he needed it! He liked to cook and when he did, he did it well. This was typical Axel - nothing was ever done half heartedly.

We had fun and shared many laughs. He had a great sense of humour and wit. However, as one got to know Axel you soon realized how incredibly gifted that he was in so many diverse areas. He was brilliant in understanding world affairs and how things worked in life. He not only understood many of the complexities of world affairs, social issues and engineering science but he possessed the rare ability to teach and explain the "how and why" of life. I was forever captivated by his "teaching talks" which often would go from one issue to another, like building blocks without skipping a beat. He was truly amazing at providing insight into so many issues. Our conversations would go on for hours and never really finish. We would put the topic on hold until our next meeting.

And if you knew Axel you knew that he was also an incredible engineer and builder. At first it was the foot bridge that he created to connect the front yard to the street, then it was the amazing tree swing that he made for the grandchildren. Inside the house, the stair case leading up to the loft was "Axel'd". The big project was the rear decks that Axel designed and built with ingenuity and....with no nails.

“Why would you use nails when screws are far superior?” And let's not forget the stacked wood on the side of the house and along the yard.....placed in truly traditional German fashion as it would be in the old country.....impeccably neat and straight....without a doubt the best stacked wood on the Point!

Axel loved his family and always spoke highly of his children, grand children and son in-law. Axel was proud of their achievements and their many talents. Whenever the conversation allowed, he would be quick to express how lucky he was to have so many great people in his life. Axels' life was colourful and full. From his humble memories as a child in a small, one room cabin in post war Germany that he shared with his grandparents with the nearby stream, to graduating from New Westminster high school in the 1960'she was candid and open about his life and the many experiences that he had lived. Never complaining and never in the negative. Life was good and life had been good with many lessons learned over the course of seven plus decades.

He dearly missed his “Kate” and he loved to share the stories of his life in New York City, living large in the 80's and 90's. As a proud “just left of center” democrat, he also had fond memories of campaigning for the democratic party in Michigan during an election where he took on the formidable task of asking the undecided to cast their vote for his party. He did this while knocking door to door “knowing that many of the home owners had guns and wondered who the heck is this guy coming to my front door and what the hell does he want?”

When Covid hit, our neighbourly situation changed due to border restrictions and we were left high and dry on the Canadian side. We exchanged e-mails and phone calls for the first weeks but soon would meet at the border to catch up and thank him for keeping an eye on our lot. As time went on Axel was invaluable in keeping our Point Roberts property in shape and our cabin in order, we are forever grateful for the kindness that he provided. As Covid marched on our meetings became weekly and our conversations went on for hours. Axel sitting on the tailgate of his

old blue, on the US side of the border while we sat in lawn chairs on the Canadian side, some 3 meters away. It was a great neighbourly experience with a good friend. We shared food, drink and many deep conversations about life in general and US politics of course!

We met most weeks, for well over a year....keeping up to date on world affairs and discussions on how life would unfold when the pandemic is over. It wasn't until late January when Axel told us of his unplanned trip to the hospital in Bellingham on December 26th - playing down the extent of his physical condition. As we continued to meet at the border he would tell of us of his good days and bad nights.

But in true Axle form, the extent of the "bad nights" was hidden from us until early April. In March, after selling our cabin, Axel was instrumental in helping us preserve family memorabilia and memories. He put up a tent and moved our precious items to his yard since we could not enter Point Roberts due to Covid. A plan had been made and Axle would not budge when set upon a task that involved helping others.

The months of April and May brought more sunshine during our visits along the 49th parallel, along with jovial quips as various friends and relatives set up picnic tables and lunches along the border in a socially distant fashion. Axel knew almost everyone that would come to the US side of the border, always graciously extending a greeting or helping hand, even during a "bad day". On one occasion he assisted a neighbor from the Point that had trouble with keys and her car. As always, he went that extra mile.

In mid May, a new phase occurred. Axels' future plans were being finalized and it was a sad and difficult "last visit". Goodbyes, hugs and hints of tears were exchanged at the border ~ all attempting to be stalwart. We knew our friend was taking control of his future in true "Axel" fashion. To support him was the best way that we could as friends.

To all of you, Axels' family: Thank you for keeping in touch. We loved Axel and his life was optimized as kindness shared ~ be it to people, the birds, or the neighboring deer. He treasured them all, but most of all please know how much he treasured you - his family. He frequently talked of you all as being his greatest supports and greatest friends.

— Rick and Cathy Parent

We are so sorry to hear of the passing of Axel. We never met him but are friends with his neighbor and on several visits to Point Roberts had the luxury of meeting Gus. Upon our return to New Zealand we would often ask about Gus, claiming to be his no 1 fans all the way in NZ, in turn a friendship was formed directly with Axel via email and those exchanges were fun, thoughtful and insightful. May you rest in peace Axel, thank you for your friendship and allowing us to share the company of Gus. Kelly

— Kelly

Such a beautiful obituary, which brought memories flooding back to me. I remember Axel as being the sweetest, funniest, most creative soul ever. Unforgettable.

Sending much love to you all, especially dear Noelle and Margaret. Be happy, he will live on in your hearts☐

— Clare Hart



<https://www.myalternatives.ca/obituaries/schonfeld-axel>

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