

## Memorial Minute for Reuben Laznovsky, aka Hersh

**Laznovsky, aka Hersh**—Reuben Laznovsky aka Hersh, on January 3, 2020, at his home in Santa Fe, NM. Reuben was born to immigrant Jewish parents in New York, NY on December 9, 1927. Laznovsky was his paternal family name, but it was changed to Hersh after the family immigrated. Late in his life Reuben began introducing himself as Reuben Laznovsky, as a way to honor his earlier ancestors.

He was a brilliant child, graduating from high school at age 14 and Harvard at 19, with a degree in English literature. He served briefly in the U.S. Military in South Korea before the Korean War. He then worked at Scientific American magazine, as a mailroom clerk and working up to editorial assistant. He then became a machinist, joining the working class in keeping with his radical political perspective at the time and with hopes of organizing the machinists. His work as a machinist ended in 1957 when he cut off his right thumb in a machine accident.

While convalescing, he decided to go to graduate school in mathematics, graduating with a Ph. D. from Courant Institute at New York University in 1962. He received his tenure-track position at the University of New Mexico in 1964 retiring in 1995. However he continued to teach until age 80. He was a successful mathematician but was better known for his writings on the philosophy of mathematics. Ulf Persson, a longtime colleague, described Reuben as a “very articulate proponent for the human side of mathematics.”

He wrote or co-authored seven books and shared a National Book Award in Science for *The Mathematical Experience* (1981) with co-author Phillip J. Davis. He was co-author of *Loving and Hating Mathematics: Challenging the Myths of Mathematical Life*, which was published in 2010 and co-authored with Vera John Steiner, his companion who he lived with for 30 years, and also a professor at UNM. In 2015 he published a book about his friend and mentor Peter Lax, a well known mathematician. *Humanizing Mathematics and its Philosophy: Essays Celebrating the 90th Birthday of Reuben Hersh* was published in 2017 and contained essays by eminent 20th Century philosophers and mathematicians.

Reuben was committed to social justice and was an active member of the Religious Society of Friends since 1968, when he joined the Albuquerque Monthly Meeting and later transferred his membership in the 1980's to Santa Fe Monthly Meeting. He was active in Amnesty International as well.

Reuben is survived by his son Daniel Hersh of Martinez, CA, daughter Eva Hersh, of Palmetto, FL, grandchildren David Hersh, JJ Hersh and Ze'ev Johnsen. Reuben was the last of his generation in his family and outlived his ex-wife Phyllis Hersh and beloved companion Vera John Steiner. A Memorial Service in the Manner of Friends was held February 22, 2020 in Santa Fe, NM.

Additional information about Reuben is available online: Elena Anne Corie Marchisotto in the July issue of the Journal of Humanistic Mathematics at <https://scholarship.claremont.edu/cgi/viewcontent.cgi?article=1773&context=jhm> . And: A detailed obituary of Reuben by his friend and fellow mathematician Ulf Persson was recently published in the European Mathematical Society newsletter. You can read it online at [https://www.ems-ph.org/journals/show\\_pdf.php?issn=1027-488X&vol=6&iss=116&rank=7](https://www.ems-ph.org/journals/show_pdf.php?issn=1027-488X&vol=6&iss=116&rank=7) .