

In Memoriam

Larry Schwalbe

February 3, 1945 – January 31, 2023

We have lost one of our giants in the Shroud world with the passing of Larry Schwalbe on January 31, 2023. His status as an important and respected physicist at Los Alamos National Laboratories for 30 years was very impressive, as was his additional 4 years of work at the Pentagon. And, it is because of his professional credentials as a scientist that he was tapped to become an original team member for the Shroud of Turin Research Project (“STURP.”) And, with his membership on the STURP team, he embarked upon a lifelong quest to study, investigate, understand and scientifically explain the physical and chemical nature of the blood and body images on the Shroud of Turin, and to determine what could –and could not–have formed these images.

Additionally, Larry’s character was also a very important contribution to this team of outstanding individuals. In his 1983 book, “Report on the Shroud of Turin,” the late STURP team member John Heller had the following to say about Larry: “Larry is a painstaking, rigorous investigator. His extremely critical demands on himself and other members of the team would occasionally cause gritting of teeth and bouts of profanity, but no one bore him the least ill will. There can be no argument with demands for precision and excellence.” I cannot think of a finer statement to say about someone’s professionalism and personal ethics.

During the year before his death, Larry had been involved with fellow STURP team member Samuel Pellicori in studying important Shroud issues with respect to conserving the Shroud for future generations. Just one day prior to Larry’s death, the scientific paper that the two of them co-wrote was published in the International Journal of Archaeology. That was Larry – dedicated to advancing Shroud scholarship right up until the very end. I have so much respect for that.

And, to those of us who had the great privilege of knowing him, we knew him to be very helpful in answering various scientific and Shroud-related questions, and we knew him to be a great and very patient teacher with us, and it was always such a pleasure to discuss Shroud matters with him. And, he had a wonderful quick wit that often made us smile and laugh. But, most of all, he had a very kind soul.

Just two months before Larry died, my beloved Uncle died after being in the hospital for 10 days. In dealing with my uncle’s health crisis and then making preparations for his funeral, my regular comments in a Shroud group and a pun group (that Larry and I were members of) came to an abrupt halt for over a two-week period. Larry could sense that something must be very wrong with me due to this very unusual, prolonged silence from me in both groups. And, he was correct. My world had shattered.

And so, in a gentle effort to check on me to see if I was okay, he did something that he knew would elicit both a reaction and a response from me. And, indeed, it did. Since Larry knew that I continued to be such an ardent critic of Walter McCrone's, Larry sent out a humorous pretend letter from McCrone to our pun group. And, with this "letter from McCrone," Larry brought a ray of light into one of the darkest days of my life, and Larry made me both laugh and feel comforted in the knowledge that my friend was concerned about me and was trying to delicately "check on me" by drawing me out with such a humorous letter. I present that "letter from McCrone" below –as both a ray of light and a chuckle –from Larry himself—to all of us who are so saddened by his passing:

At long last, the vile attacks by that "person" Teddi Pappas seem to have abated. The reason I believe follows from the in-depth forensic study by my good friend Larry and his team who lately unearthed the remains of dozens of medieval artists, all of which contain residual traces of Fe_2O_3 on their fingertips. At this point, and as I have maintained from the beginning, it is without doubt the "Shroud" is indeed a pastel finger painting and not the result of some miraculous resurrection event. And so, T.E.D.I., the only remaining question is which of the suspect artists committed the forgery? The consensus among the analysts is that the work was conducted by a local political charlatan, a Giuseppe Bideninni who shortly after producing his masterwork emigrated with his family to the New World where he and his progeny seem to have faded to obscurity. Hope this clears things up.

All the best,

Walter

Thank you, Larry, for your many years of spending your time, talent and treasure in advancing the scientific knowledge regarding an artifact which, for many, is the most important artifact to have ever existed. Thank you for all that you taught me and for our very interesting email correspondences about the Shroud. And, thank you for the kindness that you showed me and the laughs that you gave me –especially in one of my darkest hours.

My deepest condolences to Larry's family as they endure his loss.

Rest in peace, my friend.

-Teddi Pappas