



# Roberto Paolo Ayala

November 5, 1935 - April 7, 2019

Painter, Architect, Engineer,

Supporter of the Arts, Chef, Latin Dancer

Latin ballroom dancing, grand cuisine, opera (grand and otherwise), and world travel lost one of their most enthusiastic fans and supporters when Roberto Paolo Ayala passed from this world at the age of 83, the evening of Sunday, April 7. Propelled by his genuinely bubbling personality, Roberto grabbed life by the shoulders and embraced it warmly. When his eyes lit up and his toothy smile flashed, friends within arms-length happily prepared themselves for that same embrace. While his corporeal expression of love is gone, Roberto will live on in memory forever.

Born in Havana November 5, 1935 to parents of Spanish ancestry but modest means, Roberto at age twenty-four, with \$200 hidden in the sole of his shoe, left Cuba by air for Miami with his parents, his twin brother Rodolfo and Rodolfo's wife. Timing is everything: only three months later, Cuba broke all relations with the United States.

After only several months in Miami, the entire family was taken to San Juan,

Puerto Rico by a Cuban-born businessman friend of the family who was developing real estate there. While in San Juan, Roberto started the Art Students League of the Americas. He worked as an architect in San Juan for sixteen years before moving to Houston in 1975 where he was an engineer for Gerald Hines and Naman+Associates until his retirement.

On December 6, 1975, on a blind date in Houston, Roberto met Jesse Weir, a fixture among Houston Grand Opera (HGO) volunteers. The two fell in love and became committed lifetime partners until Roberto's death. They were united in marriage on September 12, 2013. Roberto developed a great love for HGO for which he and Jesse gave more than twenty-five cast parties in the home they shared. Roberto often served not only as co-host, but also as chef de cuisine at these fun-filled, star-studded and often raucous events.

Roberto was also a longtime volunteer for Alley Theater, Stages Repertory Theatre, and Theater Under The Stars. Jesse often lectured on opera on worldwide ocean cruise ships. Roberto went along to see the world and frequently had fun as a ballroom dance partner with passengers. Roberto enjoyed this opportunity to meet people and engage in one of his favorite pastimes.

Roberto is survived by his life partner, Jesse Weir of Houston, his identical twin brother Rodolfo and sister-in-law Sagry of San Juan, plus many beloved family and friends. A private commemoration of life is planned. Those wishing to honor Roberto are encouraged to donate in his name to Houston Grand Opera Endowment, 510 Preston St., Houston, TX 77002.