

THE BIG DAY

# After three decades of friendship, they found their way to love

Laura Coleman and Ronenn Roubenoff had been platonic friends, colleagues, and scientific peers, but when the opportunity for love appeared, they never looked back.

By **Rachel Kim Raczka** Globe Correspondent, Updated February 25, 2025, 6:05 a.m.



Laura Coleman and Ronenn Rubenoff of Brookline wed Dec. 31, 2024, at Temple Israel of Boston; they rang in the New Year during their reception at Four Seasons One Dalton. JILL PERSON

Read more from [The Big Day](#), The Boston Globe's new weddings column.

It started with a mint tea.

It was July 2023, and Laura Coleman let go of her mug when her longtime friend Ronenn Roubenoff took her hands from across the table. They'd met for lunch at Trident Booksellers in the Back Bay. And he had hopes of changing their relationship forever.

“I'm not going anywhere,” he told her, “ever — unless you tell me to.”



Over the span of 30-plus years, Laura and Ronenn leaned on each other for friendship, advice, and moral support. When life opened up to something more, neither let another moment pass. JILL PERSON

Their platonic friendship had spanned more than three decades, persisting through marriages, divorce, and losses. They first met in September 1990, waiting for the Orange Line at what was then the New England Medical Center stop. Ronenn's first wife, Rebecca, introduced Laura, her classmate in the PhD program in Nutrition at Tufts University.

Laura and the couple became close. She and Rebecca planned double dates with Laura's then-partner and shared dinners while Ronenn was at work.

Rebecca had been diagnosed with lung cancer before the couple moved from Baltimore to Medford, and as her illness progressed, Laura delivered her missed school work and class recordings. After Rebecca passed away in 1992, Laura and Ronenn remained in touch through moves, marriages, and intersecting career paths.



The couple served his and hers signature cocktails — the Groom's was a French 75; the Bride's, a boulevardier, a nod to a favorite drink during their first months as a couple. JILL PERSON

Laura relocated to Wisconsin with her then-husband and their two boys. They divorced in 2004, but she remained in the Midwest until her sons finished school.

Ronenn remarried and was widowed twice more. Abby, who had been his high school sweetheart, died from lung cancer in 2005. He married Barri in 2007 and the couple moved to Switzerland in 2014. In 2021, Barri was diagnosed with ALS and the family returned to the Boston area so she could participate in a clinical trial locally; she passed away from the disease in October 2022.





The couple's first dance was to "All the Things You Are," sung by Ella Fitzgerald. JILL PERSON

“He is the most resilient individual I know or have ever known,” says Laura, who moved back to Boston in 2022. “The fact that he can continue to find joy and goodness and love after the unfathomable losses he’s experienced is remarkable to me.”

She had also grown close with Barri and Abby during their marriages, calling them “strong, smart women... He’s not intimidated by super strong women.”

Grief did not elude the father of three. But despite experiencing the worst, Ronenn remained hopeful for another love story.

“It’s not about forgetting what you’ve lost,” he says, “but it’s also not getting frozen in it. It’s like that [Bob Seger song](#) — ‘*Wish that I didn’t know now, what I didn’t know then.*’ But you can’t know, you know? You can’t live like that.”



©C.Hamburger'24

During the ceremony, their four sons — Laura's Ben and Andrew Rall, and Ronenn's Austin and Ethan — held the chuppah, after Ben and Andrew walked their mother down the aisle. COOS HAMBURGER

In June 2023, Ronenn retired from Novartis, where he had worked for nearly 14 years, and where Laura had also worked up until earlier that spring. (She is currently a clinical research scientist at Eli Lilly; he consults for biotech companies in the area.)

For the two scientists, their happy ending wasn't a hypothesis, nor was marriage.

“It was a matter of *when*, not *if*,” says Laura.



The newlyweds with Laura's two sons, Ben and Andrew Rall, and Ronenn's sons Austin and Ethan and his daughter Talia. The bride wore a gown by Sarah Seven purchased from Ceremony in Newton. It was embellished with pearls, which she likened to champagne bubbles. Ronenn's tuxedo was from Mr. Sid. JILL PERSON

After their fateful Trident lunch, they navigated their first months as a couple. Laura's two adult sons lived in other states, but Ronenn still had two teens in his Brookline home.

Laura began to join family dinners; they reserved Saturdays for date nights: [dinners at Fox & the Knife](#) in her South Boston neighborhood, a [Springsteen concert at Gillette](#) with friends.

“On a very facile level, [Laura] had known everybody [in my life]. You don't have to explain as much,” says Ronenn. “The starting point wasn't zero. It was at 50.”



Jodi Raphael of Jodi Raphael Events was recommended to the pair by the event planner at the Four Seasons. Her team worked with floral design studio Lotus Floral Events to create an elegant seasonal colorscape, focused on winter whites and silvers. JILL PERSON

In October, Ronenn joined Laura on a business trip to Hamburg, Germany. One night, he casually asked: “When we get back, do you want to go look at a ring?”

Approval from Ronenn’s now-14-year-old daughter Talia came in the form of a command: “Abba [Hebrew for father], you better get down on one knee if you’re going to propose to Laura.”

On Dec. 6, 2023, he followed Talia’s advice and proposed to Laura with the ring they had designed with [Shreve, Crump & Low](#) in Boston.

“Then, he was down there, and said, ‘OK, but now I don’t think I can get back up,’” Laura remembers. “So, I got down on my knees, too, and we were both just cracking up. I said, ‘Well, we can go through life on our knees together.’”





The groom toasted the bride with herbal tea when the clock struck midnight, ushering in 2025. JILL PERSON

In January, Laura moved in with the family. Ronenn, now 65, and Laura, 64, wed on Dec. 31, 2024, at [Temple Israel of Boston](#).

Their 130 guests gathered as the couple read the vows they had written in a ceremony officiated by Rabbi Elaine Zecher. While Laura was not raised religious, she had discovered her Jewish ancestry while looking through old family documents years before. She views her conversion to Judaism as a reclamation of her identity, with Ronenn, who is Jewish and was born in Israel before moving to Baltimore at age 7, supporting her as she explored her faith.

The couple wove Jewish traditions throughout the day, though the primary focus — and directive to wedding planner Jodi Raphael of [Jodi Raphael Events](#) — was to keep guests on the dance floor. A New Year's Eve wedding was a fresh start and a celebration for both; they wanted a big day that felt exclusively theirs.



The Bride's 'something blue' was royal blue satin Manolo Blahnik heels. JILL PERSON

At their black tie reception at the Four Seasons One Dalton, blinis and caviar accompanied champagne. The 15 members of Wilson Stevens' [Radiance](#) kept the dance floor packed. The Bride danced with her 97-year-old father, before their friends lifted Laura onto a chair during "Dancing Queen." [Artist Etta Shon](#) painted custom portraits for guests to take away.

Coos Hamburger, Ronenn's childhood best friend, who had stood by him at his previous weddings, gave a toast; maid of honor Paula Manchesterspoke on Laura's behalf, as she had done for Laura's first wedding decades before.



The idea for a New Year's Eve wedding came to Ronenn after he remembered attending another that had been the "best wedding" he had ever been to. Following their celebration, the couple honeymooned in Virgin Gorda in the British Virgin Islands. JILL PERSON

As the clock ticked down to midnight on the stage, Laura lifted her champagne glass and Ronenn raised a mug — it was mint tea, a tonic for his voice that had gone hoarse from conversation and laughter.

Sparkling confetti rained down as they shared their first midnight kiss as husband and wife, before the band kicked off 2025 with an ABBA disco classic.

*“Gimme, gimme, gimme a man after midnight; Take me through the darkness to the break of the day.”*

Read more from [The Big Day](#), The Boston Globe's new weddings column.

---

Rachel Kim Raczka is a writer and editor in Boston. She can be reached at [rachel.raczka@globe.com](mailto:rachel.raczka@globe.com).

[Show 24 comments](#)

---

©2025 Boston Globe Media Partners, LLC