

DAVID NORMAN NESS

(1939-2006)

Philadelphia Inquirer (Wednesday, February 22, 2006)—David Norman Ness, 66, of Gladwyne, a former professor at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania, died of complications following surgery Saturday at the Hospital of the University of Pennsylvania.

Professor Ness was an assistant professor at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in the 1960s when he worked on Project MAC, the pioneering research project that significantly advanced the development of computer operating systems.

He had earned a bachelor's degree from the school and studied at Oxford University in England as a Rhodes Scholar when he returned to MIT to join the faculty.

Professor Ness moved to this area in 1973 to take a position at the Wharton School. He was an associate professor of decision science and assistant dean of undergraduate studies. He served in the administrative post for several years and then became a full-time professor.

He retired in the late 1980s, but continued working as a consultant. He served as director of electronic data processing at TV Guide in Radnor and developed a confidential information management system for the investment bank Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette Inc. in New York.

He married Susan Schneider in 1973. They divorced in 1981. He married Robyn Weyand in 1987. They divorced in 1993.

Surviving are a daughter, Antonia, and a brother, Stephen.

This obituary from the *Philadelphia Inquirer* summarizes the life of Dave Ness (Minnesota and Magdalen '61). In the Fall of 1961 six Rhodes Scholars and two Marshall Scholars were admitted to Magdalen College. Two died in tragic accidents before Dave Ness—Gilbert Low and Harris Funkenstein. Now with the death of Ness (we usually called him that rather than David) there are five of us remaining, three Rhodes Scholars (David Souter, Mel Levine and Jim Moose) and two Marshall Scholars (Stuart Kauffman and Stanley Bates).

Ness was an open, gregarious and friendly midwesterner. He had spent four years at MIT, the last few in a fraternity. This seemed to have suited him very well for he enjoyed the camaraderie and openness that he found there. He arrived at Oxford determined to carry on the role of a

fraternity brother, which he did admirably. His room was the one to go to for a glass of port or sherry and a story, joke or good conversation. He had a wide range of interests but was particularly well informed about computers and programming, subjects which the rest of us were only partially familiar with. This was still the day of main-frames; the acolytes who attended them and a number of us were interested in finding out what they did and were keen to learn from someone who had served as a high level acolyte.

Ness took it upon himself to keep detailed records of his expenditures. Most of us were just concerned that our expenditures remain in balance with the stipends we received, but Ness kept track of every penny he spent by category of expenditure. He thought this would be useful training for the rest of his life, which he assumed would be spent in business.

Along with the rest of us, Ness took the opportunity to travel. He had a connection with a German family in a suburb of Frankfurt, through a student exchange program, and went to visit them when he had a chance. From this base he traveled around Europe between terms and in the summer, much enjoying his experiences and returning with new stories.

Ness spent the summer of 1962, along with some of us, in a rented villa in Savoy. His wit was gentle and ironic as it mined the unremitting flow of personalities we encountered and welcomed during those months. He began and ended each day with serious games of solitaire that were carried forth and monitored under the lens of his mathematical mentality. During that summer of 1962, Ness—whose standard pre-2:00pm uniform consisted of his pajamas, resolved to study for an economics prize for which he was to compete in the fall, though due to dubious priorities, he never got around to extracting the needed books and research articles from the boot of his car. Shamelessly unprepared, the young scholar returned to Oxford, sat for the examination, and won the prize hands down! Games of solitaire before or since that time have seldom yielded such deserving recognition.

In the spring vacation of 1963, Ness and Bates spent a memorable vacation supposedly preparing for Schools in June. Ness picked up an Austin Healy roadster in Paris, and they drove south to the Costa del Sol in Spain. The trip was planned around the Michelin guide with one or two star restaurants determining the route. Reading was done, but travel, swimming, tennis and friendship were pursued even more earnestly.

After Oxford, most of us went to Cambridge, Massachusetts, to pursue our advanced degrees at Harvard or, in Ness's case, MIT. We assem-

bled fairly regularly for reunions or parties and Ness was almost always there in good form with a new joke, stories and reports from the rapidly developing field of information technology. He changed very little from Oxford and seemed largely unaffected by the pressures of academia or the requirement to earn a living. Rather Ness seemed determined to avoid aging by not worrying about such issues and doing what he wanted to do.

After the early 1970s there were fewer reunions as we became involved with marriages, careers and children (the order depending on the person). Ness married Susan Schneider, who had just graduated from Wellesley, and they moved to Philadelphia where they had a daughter, Antonia. We saw much less of each other, but on those occasions when we did get together, Ness was impressive because of how well he continued to resist the pressures of job and family and how much he remained the open fun-loving student we had known at Oxford. Bates saw Ness and his family most years through the 1980s and 90s, and found that conversation could always be picked up almost as though it hadn't been interrupted.

In his latter years, Ness spent much time with Antonia. He and she attended the 2003 Oxford Reunion together and made a number of trips, including regular Thanksgiving trips to Paris. She seemed to help keep Ness's outlook young, although it was obvious that he was aging unusually rapidly physically (i.e. faster than the rest of us). He and Antonia along with Jim Moose, Jim's wife Claudia, his daughter Katherine and David Souter had dinner in October of 2005. Ness was in his usual good form, full of opinions on current events, stories and jokes, but did not look healthy. Ten days later he had a heart attack, was hospitalized and never really recovered, with one medical problem leading to another. Even at the end, in January 2006, in the hospital with Susan and Antonia in attendance, he was apparently unchanged—basically the same fun loving irrepressible fraternity brother who came up to Oxford in 1961.

Stanley Bates

(Department of Philosophy, Middlebury College)

MELVIN D. LEVINE

(Rhode Island and Magdalen '61)

JAMES S. MOOSE

(Arkansas and Magdalen '61)

DAVID H. SOUTER

(New Hampshire and Magdalen '61)