

Jack Mason '60, 'Renaissance man' and former trustee, 1938–2002

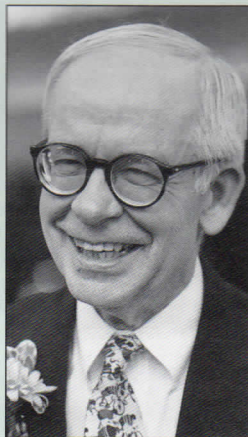
John M. “Jack” Mason '60, a former Macalester trustee, died of an apparent heart attack June 8, 2002, while bicycling around Lake Pepin with a group of friends. He was 63.

More than 500 people attended his funeral service June 12 at Macalester’s Weyerhaeuser Memorial Chapel. The speakers included former Vice President Walter Mondale '50, Professor Roger Mosvick '56, former Minnesota Atty. Gen. Warren Spannaus and Mr. Mason’s sons, Peter and Michael Mason '98. Another longtime friend, Kofi Annan '61, sent a letter of condolence.

Jack Mason followed his parents, the late Milton Mason '26 and Marion Dailey Mason '26, to Macalester. A partner and trial lawyer at Dorsey & Whitney in Minneapolis for 32 years, he took a break from practicing law to serve as Minnesota solicitor general in 1971 and state deputy attorney general from 1972 to 1973. He served on the Minneapolis school board from 1973 to 1980. Mr. Mason, who served as a Macalester trustee from 1971 to 1977 and was a devoted friend of the college, received a Distinguished Citizen Citation from Macalester in 1995.

In 1985, Mr. Mason was appointed a federal magistrate judge. One of his favorite duties was performing naturalization ceremonies, where he delighted those present with salutations in a multitude of languages. He spoke fluent German and studied Italian, French, Spanish, Korean and Arabic.

Roger Mosvick, who began teaching at Macalester the same year—1956—that Mr. Mason enrolled as



Jack Mason

a freshman, spoke of his friend’s social consciousness, remarkable range and depth of public service, and gift for friendship. While his friends enjoyed Mr. Mason’s “signature wit, one soon saw that behind those one-liners was an incisive, innovative mind and a very serious, dedicated person,” Mosvick said.

Jack was the nearest to a self-actualized person that I have known,” Mosvick said. “He was a man who was constantly reinventing himself, taking classes all his life, studying German and five other languages, in part so that he could greet new citizens in their own language, deciding to learn to play classical piano at the age of 50, with a recital no less. There was scarcely a subject in which he did not take an interest. Jack was one of the rare Renaissance men of our day, a person who lived the liberal arts mission, always learning, always positive, every day believing how lucky he was to have this wonderful family, these great professional opportunities and this rich circle of friends.”

In addition to his sons, Mr. Mason is survived by his wife of 39 years, Vivian, daughter Kathleen, sisters Marilyn Mason '61 and Jean Caswell, and brothers James and Donald. ●