

## **DAVID E. OSTERHOUT**

Died: January 23, 2014

David Edward Osterhout, a former attorney and consummate family man, died at his home in Washington, DC, on Thursday, January 23rd, 2014. He was 74. David grew up in the zinc smelting town of Palmerton, PA, where, as a shifty point guard, he helped lead his high school basketball team to the Pennsylvania state championship game in 1956. David went on to graduate from Dartmouth College, in the class of 1961, later attaining his law degree from the University of Minnesota.

While working on Capitol Hill for Congressman Dan Flood, he met his future wife, Susan, on a double blind date. After over a decade of courtship, they married and had two children, Jacob and Jeannette, whom he loved dearly. David will forever be remembered as a great cook, a voracious reader, a modern art lover, a student of the game of basketball, and a passionate storyteller. He is survived by his wife, Susan Tannenbaum, their two children, Jacob and Jeannette, and their spouses, Dr. Vanessa Ng and Santiago Martinez Govela.

In lieu of flowers, contributions can be sent to AYUDA Inc ([ayudainc.net](http://ayudainc.net)), the Dartmouth Class of 1961 Legacy Fund (Hopkins Center, Dartmouth College, Hanover, NH 03755), and Food and Friends ([foodandfriends.org](http://foodandfriends.org)).

Jacob E. Osterhout  
Writer  
[www.JacobOsterhout.com](http://www.JacobOsterhout.com)

On Thursday, January 23rd, 2014, my father's heart finally gave out on him. The following is the eulogy that I gave at his funeral. If you knew him, you'll appreciate these memories. If you didn't, you would've liked him.

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My father would be very happy that so many people here are wearing all black today.

In his honor, I should start off by telling a long, slow story. But I won't. I'll try and keep it short.

David Edward Osterhout died in his sleep next to my mother in the same bed they shared for 35 years. He died in peace, which is ironic considering my father was not a peaceful man. He liked to shout and yell and laugh and cry.

I was lucky enough to speak with my father the night before he died. We talked about his new Sonos speaker system and the Apple TV and how the space heater blew a fuse but he couldn't figure out which one so he reset

them all, which caused the TV to stop working. And I told him the story of how my credit card was compromised at a restaurant and that I thought the manager, named Jesus, was in on it. He loved the fact that a man named Jesus might have robbed me. I am so glad I had the opportunity to speak with my father the night before he died. I only wish I had told him I loved him. But Osterhout men don't do that often. So here I am, left only with memories of my father.

He was a good man - smart and passionate and creative and wise. He knew the world was full of "sheep and shepherds." He knew the difference between "ritz and glitz." And he knew that "sometimes you should give a penny, sometimes save a penny, but never put a penny in your mouth."

He loved art, specifically modern and contemporary art. If my father had lived another 20 years, I'm not sure where he would've put all the artwork he bought. In fact, he loved art so much that he made it himself, dotting our backyard with sculptures and creating t-shirts (that we never wore) with a family crest he designed himself.

My father loved basketball. He loved basketball so much that when I was in high school, dinnertime became two-hour coaching sessions.

My father loved to tell stories, even if you had heard them before, twice. He knew how to tell a 30-minute story in 45 minutes.

He loved to cook. He was a master in the kitchen. But ironically, he didn't love to eat his own cooking. I'm pretty sure cooking was just a ploy to gain a captive audience for his stories.

My father loved to read. He read three newspapers a day before moving on to a wide array of books. Fiction, non-fiction, poetry - he read them all.

And he loved the singer Leonard Cohen. He loved Leonard Cohen so much that for MY birthday he took me to a Leonard Cohen concert, thereby solidifying my dislike of Leonard Cohen.

But most of all, my father loved his family. He would do anything for me and my sister. We were, in his eyes, his greatest achievements. He loved that I went to his alma mater, Dartmouth. He loved that Jenny went to Duke. He loved my wife, Vanessa, and Jenny's husband, Santiago. And he loved all of our friends, treating them, for good or for bad, just like family.

And, of course, my father adored my mother. Although, sometimes he had a funny way of showing it. "Goddammit, Susie," really meant "I love you so much dear, but could you please do it this way." Under a grumpy exterior, he was a softy, deeply in love with my mom. Here is the card he gave my mom on her birthday two weeks ago...

"For your birthday, I have made you a special necklace.

It took forty-seven years to make. Because it is made of words, it can only exist in your imagination. Therefore, it will not tarnish and can last forever.

There is no golden chain around your neck, just my arms; my two hands are the sturdy clasp at the back.

Arrayed along its length is an alternating pattern of hugs and kisses.

And at the hollow of your throat, as the pendant, there is my beating heart telling you in a syncopated rhythm that I will love you for the rest of my life.

HAPPY BIRTHDAY!!!!

David"

Lastly, my father loved cheap whiskey. In his view, the difference between a \$20 bottle of whiskey and a \$30 bottle was marketing. Each night, he would fill a mason jar with ice and then pour in four fingers of whatever plastic-bottle whiskey he had bought on sale at Pearson's liquor store. At the end of the night, when he had finished his whiskey, he would toss the remnants the ice cubes in the sink. When I was a child trying to fall asleep in my bed, I would hear the tinkle of those ice cubes hitting the sink and feel safe knowing that my father was calling it a night. Well, the ice cubes have hit the sink one final time. My father has called it a night.

We really miss you Dad.

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In view of the sparse information in the obituary obtained earlier from the January 24 Washington Post, I have added a few comments below from '61s who knew David at Casque and Gauntlet. Harris McKee

David majored in German, was a member of Psi Upsilon and Casque and Gauntlet and participated in Basketball and Lacross.

**Dave Blake:** What a guy he was, never at a loss for a kind, clever, and always gentle word. I want to recall, though, the one and only time David was at a loss for words.

It was the morning of my wedding as we were getting ready to go to the church. My mother, a formidable organizer, had forewarned the male members of the wedding party that she was going to conduct an inspection of them before leaving. So when the time came, there they stood all spiffed up with David O in the middle.

David had planned a surprise for my mother in that he would appear in the lineup fully prepared and looking good but without shoes. Instead he had covered his feet with black shoe polish. He expected Mom to raise the roof while he enjoyed the joke.

Mom observed these handsome and reasonably groomed C and G knights all in a line and came upon David's shoe polished feet, and quietly but firmly said "David, go put some shoes on." Not another word. David was stunned, disappointed, and promptly went off and

did so.

All of us will always remember the ever present twinkle in David's eyes. He was a friend among friends.

**Sam Bell:** In October of this year Betty and I had dinner with David and Susan at their home in DC. We spent a wonderful warm evening talking politics and reminiscing. David did the cooking and was his usual effervescent self. David and Susan had visited with us at our home in North Carolina recently when Susan was down for a family foundation meeting. We are stunned by his death.

We have enjoyed reading the articles written by David's son Jacob and we know he will be struggling to write about his dad. He was a great friend and his friendship lasted over more than 50 years. We shared our position on politics. David and Susan were contributors to our daughter in Congress and joined us for fundraiser over the years.

His death leaves a great void in our lives and hits very close to home. I have talked with Susan and learned that he died quietly in his sleep. I will miss him.

**Joel Heathcote:** David spent his first term (of our senior year) at the University of Freiburg rejoining our Delegation after Christmas. He burst into the Castle scene, full of energy, wit and exciting tales of German student life. The rest of us had already started to function as a Delegation, King'd by Bill Hutton and John King, already staging "upstairs/downstairs" "Briar Club" battles between Dutton and the entire First floor. David plunged right into the thick of our antics and immediately add his droll humor to every escapade. He had a gentle, warm sort of vibe. Friendly and freckled. Skip forward 50 years. Dave was the first '61 Knight I met when I got off the shuttle the first day of our 50th Reunion. Hadn't laid eyes on him for all that time. I jumped off the bus and into his embrace. It felt so very, very good just to be with him again. My heart smiles when I remember him, and always will.

**Harris McKee:** We have exchanged cards yearly and hugs at reunions for a long time. Mary remembers the time that she, Susan, and Judy Holmberg marched proudly with their umbrellas unfurled like drum majors leading our reuniting '61s to a dinner. She says that it can never be the same. We visited in their home at the 50th birthday party and really enhanced the friendship that we've nurtured since. We'll miss him.

**Bill Hutton:** Such sad tidings. No member of our delegation better exemplified the spirit and possibilities of life at the Corner than David Osterhout. Such a calm and measured perspective--everything was manageable; everything would turn out all right. A truly great soul, and a great friend.

I recall particularly hanging out with Dave at the Corner through the week following our graduation (though I'm not sure that "hanging out" was then part of our lexicon). At the end of that week we were bound for New Jersey, for Dave Blake's wedding, so we had four days of complete leisure, spent mainly sitting on the porch and watching the Hanover summer unfold. One could not ask for better company in such circumstances. When we last had a meaningful chance to reconnect, at our 40th, Dave was of course exactly the same guy--thoughtful and reflective, tolerant of ambiguity, and reliably engaged in the moment. To be able to rely upon the constancy of character and personality is perhaps the essence of friendship.

**Oak Winters:** Last winter, the day Olympic high jumper John Thomas' death was announced, David Osterhout phoned me to reminisce about the day in 1959 when Thomas surpassed the 7' mark during a track meet in Hanover. David, so-capable of ferreting out interesting assignments, was covering the event as a stringer for THE NEW YORK TIMES and I was an over-matched participant, representing Dartmouth, along with '61s Connie Persells and Norm Page, in the

high jump. Dave and I wistfully relived the magic of that afternoon, and, before the conversation ended, he read to me the article he sent to THE TIMES, which was printed verbatim. I was surprised that the names of all three of Dartmouth's high jumpers were included in the article, especially since each of us exited the competition long before Thomas entered it. "Simple reason," said Dave. "They paid by the word." What a wonderfully droll soul was he!

As someone whose heart-health issues caused him to stare into the dark night of death early in life, David learned to treasure friendship and daily living with intensity. I trust that many of us are convinced we were his closest friend, so fully were we embraced in his presence. How fortunate that he and Susan, equally brilliant, loving and intense, became soul-mates and parents of two wonderful children. Theirs has been a very special partnership.

David and Susan, my life--and Kathy's, too -- has been enriched immensely through knowing you. Thank you!

**Hop Holmberg:** Now it is my time to reflect. Maybe I've had more contact with David since we first were inducted into the Castle in the late winter of 1960 than any of you. I could be brief and pithy and serve all readers -- I think I'll let it run without tight editing. So, if it is a drag to you, skip me and go on to the other more concise notes.

Judy and I, both Minnesotans, were working at the Johns Hopkins Hospital when we got married in Baltimore in August of 1962. It was in the warm-up to the Cuban Missile Crisis and the Knights/Ensigns were called to duty leaving David, then at Penn Law, as the only non-family out-of-town guest at our wedding. Thus he became the best man. The maid of honor was Judy's sister Linda, from Minnesota, who caught David's eye and led him to discover that non-resident tuition at the U of Minnesota Law School was less than what he was paying at Penn. That led to his move to Minneapolis. (Things with Linda didn't work out.)

We returned to Minneapolis in '63 and David was around. Both he and we didn't have TV, so we hung together with at the apartment of a colleague of Judy's to watch JFK's funeral and related events. I don't remember how long it took David to finish law school. He was in and out of school and other things. We went to an avant garde theater to take in his participation in a play I never quite understood. The quirky romanticism of David came out in his fascination with the theme of a red balloon, as seen then in a movie and a book by the same title. When we bought our first house, David was the first visitor.

After law school David went to DC and worked on the staff of his (from Palmerton, PA) Congressman, "Dapper Dan" Flood (yes, he wore spats!). I was flying to DC every few months and often saw David and pretty soon dinner included someone named Susie. Then we moved to DC. David was the first visitor to our house. David was an adventuresome cook who introduced us to realms of food we had never known. And he had an Orange Porsche.

His more substantial work came when he joined the staff of Wisc. Senator Gaylord Nelson. Remember Earth Day? That was Nelson and his environmental staffer, David. That led to lots of letters, especially from kids, to the Senator. And David put together a book of these letters "What are you and me going to do about it?" It was a gem. I think it was an environmental conference that took him to Toronto where he became ill with pericarditis. It was squeezing his heart and they had to open his chest and remove the pericardium. Those were anxious days in DC. I vividly remember greeting him at DC National Airport on his return. Visiting his mom's house in Palmerton introduced us to lots of David's past. He had no siblings. His mom and dad were very much in love, and there was a sense that somehow David felt a bit left out. Four Holmberg's and Susie and David did weekend camping in rural Virginia to get away from the Washington heat. Eventually David moved to working as aide to a member of the Federal Election Commission. This brought out his propensity to be cynical about the workings of government.

We were only in DC 2 years before moving to Boston. We drove into Newton Mass on a Saturday afternoon, went to close on the house, and then went to the house: the Porsche with David and Susie was waiting to greet us. The furniture had not yet been delivered and each family chose a carpeted stair landing as its overnight bed. (That ended the tradition of being the first visitor. We never convinced them to join us in Nairobi, Cairo, Muscat, or Kigali.) There were Dartmouth Football games at Yale and Princeton; cross-country skiing in Vermont.

And finally they decided to get married! It was a great series of events in Greensboro. The day after the wedding we drove to DC and moved into their house for overnight. They arrived later (a honeymoon with the Holmbergs?) and in the morning we got them on a plane to the real honeymoon. After Jacob was born we loaded the family in the car on a Friday evening and drove the 6 hours from Boston to Palmerton to spend the weekend admiring the baby and getting loaded, by David, with lots of Germanic smoked meats from his favorite local vendors.

Sometimes a year or more would go by, and then we'd reconnect. It was always an exuberant conversation. David had many faces. He could be fiercely commanding of the their kids and Susie. He had a streak of melancholy. And it was always fun to see them.

Dartmouth Reunions were always a pleasant connection. By the 50th David had developed a palsy, apparently not significant. After the 50th they came to Concord Mass with us. Together we wandered down the wide path known as "battle road" in the Minuteman National Park. David and I were ahead. Susie, following behind, told Judy it was the first time in years that she had seen David out walking. In 2012 we convinced them to come visit us and then go onto the '61 mini-reunion in Hanover and, at the same time, the anniversary celebration at the Castle.

A few years ago, probably for David's 70th birthday, they were in Mexico City and both Jacob and Jenny had their loves with them. David was vivid in describing strolling outdoors in the evening with Susie watching to two couples ahead of them holding hands. David said that was enough, now he could die. David has had the pleasure of both of those weddings. But he didn't make it to being a grandparent. He had talked of the pain of visiting his mother in a nursing home and her saying that the waiting (to die) was terrible. She wanted it to be over. David had a good evening, went to bed, and didn't wake up. Lucky guy.

**Bill Berneking:** David and I had good times together when he was in law school at the University of Minnesota and I had a new job in Minneapolis. I had recently completed my Army service in Georgia and left in a hurry to find a job. I left behind an old 1955 Pontiac because it didn't run and was being repaired. When David's junker died, I said I had a car in Georgia that he could have if we went and got it. Surprisingly he took the offer. I don't remember how he got to Georgia, probably hitchhiked or maybe took the bus, but he brought the car back and it served him well for several years. He named it the "Snowgoose."

David had an unusual ability to focus. He did several law school courses in a night. He didn't attend many classes because he was busy with life and friends. Many late night conversations at the taverns and restaurants near the University. Then, the day or two before final exams, David would stay up all night reading and outlining the text. He always passed.