

H. Richard (Rick) Isaacson (6/7/1942 – 2/13/2010)
by Ed Williams

H. Richard Isaacson, “Rick” to his classmates in the Dartmouth Class of 1964, died at his home in Brooklyn Heights, surrounded by his family, on February 13, 2010. The cause was pancreatic cancer, which Rick had fought with remarkable openness, courage and dignity.

A memorial service, celebrating Rick’s life and work was held in the Plymouth Church near his home on March 22, 2010. It is sometimes said, on such occasions, that a person has lived his life to the fullest. There can be no doubt that this applied to Rick. His mantra, particularly during his last three difficult years (and Rick was well known for creating just the right phrase) was: “The name of the Game is to stay in the Game.” Rick did just that, right to the end. He compiled his last “play book” made up of deeds, life insurance policies, lists of accounts, and so forth, with the degree of completeness and precision which was Rick’s trademark throughout his life. He took his family on a cruise to Mexico and environs in January knowing the end was near. He even made sure that the refreshments that followed his memorial service included pastrami sandwiches (the ones that you have to cut into thirds so you can eat them) from one of his favorite luncheon places in New York, the Carnegie Deli.

Long time friends Bill Madden, Sabin Danziger and Ed Williams attended Rick’s memorial service, representing Dartmouth and the Class of 1964. Bill spoke at the service, reflecting on his deep friendship with Rick over the years that started pre-Dartmouth when Bill’s family moved to Denver. When they learned that they were both going to attend Dartmouth, Rick, already an accomplished skier, invited Bill skiing. Their friendship survived and endured even though Rick took Bill to the very top of the mountain on Bill’s first day on skis. Rick went on to become a member of the Dartmouth ski team, where he made his mark as a top jumper and alpine racer.

Rick’s love for his family and the enduring friendships forged at Dartmouth were matched only by his loyalty and contributions over 40 years to International Management Group, which he joined as one of its early employees shortly after graduating from Tuck School. Mark McCormick, IMG’s founder, had no time for fools, and Rick was no fool. As one of the longest serving members of what became one of the largest sports marketing companies in the world, Rick helped create the agency’s client management, corporate consulting and sport promotions businesses. He founded IMG Licensing in the 1980’s and nurtured and grew it into one of the world’s biggest independent celebrity, trademark and event licensing organizations.

In addition to Bill Madden’s moving remarks at the Memorial Service, what was particularly striking were the number of now middle-aged men and women in attendance who attributed their professional success to Rick’s mentoring of them at their first job at IMG. Some of them had moved on from IMG and some stayed, but all reflected on the positive impact that Rick had on their professional lives, in terms of lessons learned about integrity, commitment, generosity (Just where did he get all those Yankee hats and tickets?) and preparation, preparation and more preparation for meetings and presentations which others might have approached more casually. When someone went to Rick to bounce an idea off him, which they invariably did, Rick came back with five more. It is a particular tribute to Rick that the sometimes difficult “Big Mac”

Mark McCormick regarded Rick as an indispensable resource and entrusted Rick with some of the most challenging tasks at IMG.

Rick forged strong friendships, and he worked at it. Many of his Dartmouth classmates and others could count on getting “Happy Birthday” or “Happy Wedding Anniversary” greetings, which could best be described as a “creation” from Rick, totally unique and personal. When asked how he found time to do this, and there was a long list of recipients, Rick would just smile, and say that it was important to recognize significant milestones. Rick will long be remembered by his Dartmouth classmates for his infectious gregariousness, his good cheer, even during the time of his serious illness, his ready wit and humor, and for his entrepreneurial spirit, which accounted for his significant successes at IMG.

Throughout his long and demanding tenure at IMG, Rick was able to keep a remarkable balance in his life. His devotion to friends was topped only by his love and commitment to Phyllis and to their two boys, Andy and Daniel D’95, both of whom have gone on to build their own successful paths in life. They spent as much time as possible at their home away from home in the shadow of the fire tower of Mohonk Mountain, in New Paltz, N.Y. Both Andy and Daniel spoke with emotion at the memorial service about the important life values and lessons that Rick instilled in them in his unique and caring way, particularly in the peaceful surroundings of New Paltz, which in many ways reminded them of the land surrounding Hanover.

Members of the Class of 1964 will deeply miss Rick Isaacson, our one-of-a kind, caring classmate, who never skipped a Reunion, and they’ll remember his many contributions to the Class and the College.