

## **FAIRBANKS, Grant, Jr. (May 17, 1940—July 7, 2017)**



Grant Fairbanks, after an outstanding record at University High School in Champaign-Urbana, Illinois, added stellar academic accomplishments at Grinnell: freshmen (Hermits) and senior (Friars) men's honorary societies; Phi Beta Kappa (1961); and B.A. with Honors in Physics (1961).

As a resident of South Younker Hall, he also enjoyed success on the College track and cross-country teams. He was the captain of the track team and one of the fastest runners on the cross-country team that in 1960 won the Midwest Conference Meet at Washington Park in Chicago. One of his classmates on the cross-country team, Dick Fisher, who became an accomplished astrophysicist at NASA, fondly recalls his many conversations our senior year with Grant, who exposed him to “numerous ideas from literature and history.”

Next was graduate school. In 1969 Grant received a PhD in biochemistry from the Massachusetts Institute of Technology followed by 2½ years of post-doctoral research at Harvard University, where he began his highly acclaimed work with gel electrophoresis, including his invention of a method for fractionating membrane proteins in polyacrylamide gels, now commonly referred to as “Fairbanks Gels,” and a widely cited article on human red-blood cell membrane proteins.

Grant joined the Worcester Foundation for Experimental Biology in Shrewsbury, Massachusetts, where he ran a research laboratory for 20 years and received several awards for his work, including the American Cancer Society’s “Cancer Research Scholar” award, the Admiral Earl Award from the Worcester Engineering Society and the Grinnell College Alumni Award in 1974.

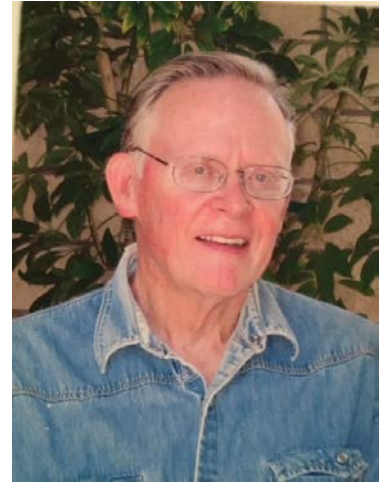
In 1991 he moved to the University of Massachusetts Medical School and Hospital, where he was Professor of Clinical Pathology and Director of Clinical Chemistry in the Hematology Laboratory until his retirement in 1999 due to progression of early-onset Parkinson’s disease that was first diagnosed in 1987.

In 1962 Grant married Ellen Wolz Kelly of Des Moines, a Grinnell graduate in 1963 and then a public school teacher and elementary school principal. They had two daughters, Katherine and Martha. Katherine, a Grinnell graduate in 1991, is a lawyer in Des Moines specializing in family law. Martha, a pediatrician in Chapel Hill, NC. In 2000 the marriage of Grant and Ellen was dissolved.

In 2003, after courting a former high school classmate, Mary (Heller) Rawcliffe, they were married and settled in California. One of their passions was genealogical research about the Fairbanks family, including Jonathan Fairbanks, who emigrated from England in 1633; and six brothers who fought in the Union Army in the Civil War, one of whom was Grant’s great-great grandfather. Grant was especially proud of Calvin Fairbanks, a Methodist pastor and abolitionist who freed 47 slaves, for which he served 17 years in prison.

Although his Parkinson's disease limited his activities in later years, he continued to participate in his community, serving as president of a Parkinson's Support Group and attending concerts in which his wife, Mary, a professional singer, performed. [Insert his recent photo on the right.]

Grant is survived by his loving wife, Mary Fairbanks; his brother, Lee McGee Fairbanks (Annie); his sister, Janet Fairbanks Thomas (Grinnell, 1964) (Dan); his daughters, Katherine Fairbanks Spencer Sargent (Grinnell, 1991) (Michael); and Dr. Martha Fairbanks Perry (Chad); six grandchildren; step-daughter, Christine (Stephen) Busch and their three sons; and his first wife, Ellen Wolz Kelly Smith.



*Duane W. Krohnke*