

## Jeffrey Neil Easterson (October 5, 1937---January 20, 2020)



Jeff Easterson from suburban Washington, D.C. spent 1955-56 at the College and 1957-58 at American University in his hometown before joining our class, 1958-61 and obtaining his Grinnell B.A. in Philosophy in January 1961. He resided in Gates Hall for his years with our class. (His college photo is on the left.)

After graduating from Grinnell and (except for graduate school at American University, 1968-70), Jeff moved to Europe for the rest of his life. In Germany's Berlin he did graduate work in philosophy at Freie Universität, which was recommended by Grinnell's Professor Paul Kuntz. Jeff also helped refugees from East Germany gain entry into and resettle in West Germany both before and after the Berlin Wall was built. He also lived in Italy and France.

While he lived in Europe, Jeff worked in European theatre festivals, 1965-1980; at European pubs and restaurants, 1968-1976; managed European bridge clubs and as a member of the executive committee of the German bridge federation from 1985 until 2000. He obtained an international license as a bridge tournament director and worked at various national, world and European bridge championships.

Another of his European activities was the theater. Because of his beard and thus resembling an ancient Teuton (German tribesman) he was commissioned to play the role of a such a tribesman in a play and his trilingualism led him into editing and writing theater bulletins. One result of this activity led to his discovery and love of the Palermo (Italy) puppet theater (Opra di Pupi) and his moving for a while to Palermo.

The highlight of his life happened in Berlin in 1984, when he met and fell in love with Jadwiga ("Jaga") Beran, and in 1989 they were married and became inseparable until his death. As she said, "He was extremely hardworking, whether he was working in theater, doing translations or overseeing bridge tournaments. He has always put in 100%. His enthusiasm and passion for whatever he was doing was contagious." Moreover, "wherever we lived, our doors were always open for friends and our house was filled with guests. Jeff had extraordinary mathematical abilities, he loved classical music, literature, theater, bridge, and above all - he loved people. Jeff was the most kind, loving and



intelligent person I've ever met in my life, and I love him very much." (Above is a photo of the two of them.)

Jaga also recalls that Jeff often talked about his time at Grinnell and said that the best thing that Grinnell gave him (apart from the basics of philosophy) were friends with whom he kept in contact all his life and that it was one of the best colleges in the U.S., which caused him to recommend it to his sister, Elizabeth Easterson Jones (Grinnell, '68).

Jeff died on January 20, 2020, in Perpignan, France. He is survived by wife Jadwiga Beran-Easterson, sister Elizabeth Easterson Jones and brother-in-law Edward E. Jones (Grinnell, '65).

*(Duane W. Krohnke, author)*