

Ridders, Robert Frederick (12/30/1939--01/02/1979). Bob Ridders from Milwaukee, Wisconsin received a B.A. degree in Physics from Grinnell in 1961. He was a member of the Math Club, and Bob Richburg, a classmate and one of his Langan Hall roommates, testifies that Bob was really bright, especially in math and the sciences, and he seemed to be able to earn top grades without the study time required for most of us. (Ridders' widow thinks this is an overstatement; she said Bob did plenty of hair pulling and worked VERY hard to earn top grades, but that was in grad school.)

Bob also was a star of the Grinnell football team and its co-captain his senior year; he and the other co-captain, Jim Simmons, interviewed the candidates for the new head football coach, and their recommended candidate, Ed Bowers, got the job. Coach Bowers later said he owed his job to Bob and Jim. Bob also participated on the track team and was a member and officer of the men's honorary athletic club (Honor G). Richburg observed that Bob was remarkable in the breadth of his interests and abilities while not talking about his many accomplishments. He just went out and did what had to be done. Bob was all around the most popular and respected guy in Langan Hall as evidenced by his being on its governing body (House Council).

In 1959, Bob and a high school friend spent the summer traveling throughout Europe. They happened to go to the beach at Scheveningen, Holland, where they met a group of young Germans. One was an attractive woman named "Renate." She recalls meeting these "two good-looking guys and giving them my address in Germany and inviting them to visit should they come through the Rhineland. A few weeks later they appeared at my family's door and stayed for a week. They were well fed by my mother and slept on the floor in our living room. Then Bob and I corresponded for a year or so before I arrived in the U.S.--my family didn't even have a phone at that time, so everything took place on paper." In 1962 Bob and Renate were married at her home in Germany.

They started their married life in Evanston, Illinois, where Bob was in graduate school at Northwestern University from 1961 to 1965. There he obtained an M.S. degree in industrial engineering and a Ph.D. degree in operations research.

Bob then joined the faculty of the University of Massachusetts at Amherst, where he became Professor of Industrial Operations and Engineering and the author of a book and articles in his field. The University in his honor maintains The Robert Ridders Garden near one of its engineering buildings.

Bob died on Jan. 2, 1979, at age 39 after a five-year battle with lympho-sarcoma. Bob was survived by Renate and their two sons, Mark and Scott, who were then only 14 and 12 years old. Renate reports, "Both sons have settled in Southwestern Colorado. Scott studied furniture design and is a successful furniture builder in the Telluride area. He and his wife, a blacksmith, are the owners of the Coal Creek Wood and Iron Works and are raising two great kids. Mark received his M.S. degree in snow physics at Boulder and leads an adventuresome life in avalanche forecasting and heli-ski guiding. Mark, who also has a M.B.A., lives in Ophir, Colorado at 10,000 feet with his wife and young daughter. Bob would be immensely proud of his sons who are living creative, athletic, and intellectually stimulating lives and carry many of his great physical and character traits."