**Theodore “Ted” Bracken**

One of the last, great Renaissance men passed away on March 9th—Theodore “Ted” Bracken Sr., (‘65).

A master at anything he put his remarkable mind to, Ted took pride in being able to recite lines from his favorite poets and comedians, painting nature scenes from memory, cooking up tasty family dinners and Norwegian ebelskivers, needlepointing bargello chair covers, casually fixing faulty wiring or a clogged sink upon request, or pontificating at length about the history of anything that interested him—which was everything.

Born in Natick, Massachusetts to Olaf Theodore “Ted” Bracken, whose parents were immigrants from Norway, and May Shackleton Bracken Duff, who emigrated from Yorkshire, England, Ted was also step-son to Charles O. Duff and brother to Warner Bracken. From an early age, Ted’s work ethic, athletic and academic prowess were apparent. But as it was the 1950’s, he also enjoyed countless hours of innocent trouble with his neighborhood friends, many of whom remained his best friends throughout his life. At Natick High School, he was a standout student, MVP and All-Conference in football, co-captain of his undefeated track team, and was elected in 2001 to his high school’s Wall of Achievement.

Clearly, he was off to do big things at Harvard—except he never made it there. He turned, instead, to the White Mountains and Dartmouth College. This was a surprising move, especially to the folks at Harvard who, apparently, have kept tabs on him to this day. But Ted’s decision turned out to be a prescient one, perhaps the most important of his life—because he and the Big Green were made for each other.

At Dartmouth, he read and studied vociferously, quenching his thirst for knowledge, he socialized a great deal, began smoking a pipe, and picked up one of his great loves, rugby, playing on the undefeated team that gave him broken bones, lifelong friendships, and stories that have gone with him to his grave. Not content with one sport, Ted also played two-way football on two Ivy Championship teams. They nicknamed him “The Beast” for his love of running down underprepared opponents. And for his Herculean efforts on the football field, he was named All-East linebacker.

Once Ted hung up his college jerseys, “The Beast” was never seen or heard from again, except whenever the subject of his favorite film “The Godfather” came up, anytime he got his hands on a bar of chocolate, and on amateur rugby fields where, well into his 40s, he enjoyed mowing men over half his age (contact former teammate President George W. Bush for corroboration).

Learning, curiosity and education were never far from Ted’s big heart. He earned his MA in Education from Columbia University in 1970, and did further postgrad study at Harvard. He began his career teaching math at PS 125 in Harlem and the Mount Hermon School, and working in admissions at Princeton University, where he proudly admitted a stand-out applicant, Sonia Sotomayor. The rest of his long and rewarding career was spent at the research organization Consortium on Financing Higher Education (COFHE) as Director of Federal Relations where he oversaw federal legislation and regulations affecting higher education. Even into retirement, Ted continued to enrich the lives of eager students as an avid and adored ESL teacher, exemplifying his ‘pay it forward’ credo. As a son of Dartmouth, he supported the college throughout his life as a member of the Rugby Club Board of Directors and the Washington, DC Club Board, as well as in numerous capacities for the Class of ‘65.

Ted was a man of complementary contradictions. He was a proud “nerd,” who was such a sports fanatic, his Washington, DC vanity license plate read, “Natitud,” the unofficial slogan of the Washington Nationals baseball team. Genealogy and history were favorite pastimes of Ted’s, as was doing his children’s taxes well into their adulthood. A creature of habit, he named dogs from his two marriages Boomer 1 and Boomer 2, but he was always ready to travel or experience something new. He skied and SCUBA dove all over the world, bungee jumped in New Zealand, explored the game parks of Africa, hiked Machu Picchu, and was set for an epic January trip to the only continent he hadn’t set foot on, Antarctica, which was cut short only due to ill-health. If there is a man who loved both opera and hockey as vociferously as Ted, his children have yet to meet his equal.

As if all this wasn’t enough, this gifted man was also a carpenter. He renovated and built the railings and porch of his Dupont Circle townhome with his own hands, where he nurtured and raised his four children over the course of forty years. In fact, he loved this house so much, he bought it three times: the first time for himself, and subsequently from his two ex-wives. His sturdy home, full of hefty books, colorful art, Turkish rugs, curios from his travels, and a ready, warm hearth, is where he took his last bow, due to complications of cancer.

He leaves behind a strong and growing legacy, his four beloved children whom he adored: Genevieve (Jennie) Bracken Jaffe (‘94) (Matt), Emily Bracken, Lane Bracken (‘11) (Shannon (‘11)), Todd Bracken (‘14) (Caroline (‘14)) and three grandchildren Amanda and Lindsay Jaffe, and Kaden Bracken. He is also survived by his nephew, David Bracken (‘73) (Liz), a niece Nancy Bracken Wallgren (Scott), and numerous nieces, nephews, and cousins.

They say Ted Bracken was larger than life, an unusual man because he was the complete package. Indeed, his was a full life, well-lived. He was a son, Natick-ite, and scholar athlete; a Dartmouth man, Renaissance man, and family man; a feminist, man’s man, teacher and mentor; a husband, father, and grandfather. His children are grateful for his boundless love, strong character and the example he set living by his principles. They, and the many people Ted affected, ardently miss him and the ever-present twinkle in his eye.

In the words of his favorite poet, Robert Frost: “Two roads diverged in the woods, and I–I took the one less traveled by, and that has made all the difference.”

A Memorial Service for family and close friends will be held in Martha’s Vineyard this summer.  Contributions in Ted’s memory may be made to the Dartmouth Men’s Rugby Club, Hanover, NH 03755 or to the Dupont Circle Village, 2121 Decatur Place, NW, Washington, DC 20008.