



Douglas H Graham

June 23, 1932 - October 1, 2024

Douglas H. Graham, beloved husband, father, grandfather, professor, world traveler, sports fan and former athlete, author and intellectual, died peacefully on October 1st. He was 92. Whether it was witnessing firsthand the People Power revolution that ousted Philippine dictator Ferdinand Marcos, thwarting piranha attacks on the Araguaia River in the Amazon, narrowly avoiding the genocide in Rwanda, or riding out a sandstorm in a Tuareg chieftain's tent in Niger, he did not lack for an interesting life.

Doug was born on June 23, 1932, in Erie, Pennsylvania, the only son and second child of Mortimer and Grace Graham. His grandfather was a successful oil executive and his father a prominent local attorney, which made possible a childhood largely spared of the privations that touched so many others during the Depression years. Doug recalled a largely idyllic adolescence, filled with sandlot sports, fishing, sailing in Presque Isle bay, and swimming at nearby beaches.

He attended Erie's Strong Vincent High School for a year before transferring to Phillips Academy in Andover, Massachusetts (class of '51). One of Doug's most enduring memories of his Andover years was the camaraderie and life-long friendships that were forged among the 'Boys of Bishop Hall', and the esteem they held for its bachelor housemaster and classics instructor, Alston Chase. In his memoir, Chase recalled Doug as being "a big, red-headed Scot,

a fine athlete and leader, but blessed with a temper which kept him in constant trouble.” He was indeed a gifted athlete, instrumental to the success of Andover’s football (halfback) and track (hurdles, sprinting) programs during his years there.

This success continued at Yale where he was the freshman football team’s starting halfback. A knee injury, which Doug would later call serendipitous, opened the door to his discovering the life of the mind. This duality of, on the one hand, being an athlete and avid sports fan, while on the other, embracing intellectual pursuits—literature, history, and the classics—would become a defining characteristic of Doug’s persona. At the time, Yale’s English department was the epicenter of the New Criticism movement in literary theory, and heavyweights like Robert Penn Warren and Cleanth Brooks roamed its corridors. “It was a bit daunting for us 19-year-olds to have a multiple Pulitzer Prize winner sitting across the table asking us to interpret this or that poem,” Doug recalled.

A semester abroad in Mexico was Doug’s first introduction to Latin America, a region whose culture and economics would define much of his early career. After graduation (class of ’55), and two years in the Navy, he enrolled in a Master’s program at Johns Hopkins School for International Studies where, as a Fulbright scholar, he returned to the region, this time to Brazil. Within weeks of arriving in São Paulo, Doug was introduced to a statuesque blonde named Alva Jane Castello. Three months later, they were married. He and Jane—his Girl from Ipanema—would eventually return to the U.S. where, under the guidance of future Nobel laureate Simon Kuznets, Doug started his Ph.D. in Economics at Harvard. Ever the football fan, it was during these grad school years that Doug forged his allegiance to the nascent ‘Boston’ Patriots, whose practice field was just down the road.

After passing his qualifying exams, Doug and his young family, which now

included Doug Jr. and Cristina, would spend most of the next eight years in Brazil where he held visiting appointments at the Federal University in Rio de Janeiro, and the University of São Paulo.

The mid 1960s and early 70s were golden years to be living in Brazil, military dictatorship notwithstanding. Its Miracle Economy enjoyed double digit growth rates, Bossa Nova was taking the world by storm, and its national soccer team, led by the incomparable Pelé, won the 1970 World Cup. The enriching imprint of these Brazil years on Doug's children, the youngest of whom, Geoffrey and Andrew, were born there, would be lifelong. In reminiscing about this period, Doug marveled at how the arc of his professional and social life there, out of sheer fortuitous happenstance, intersected with so many individuals who would later become some of Brazil's leading artists, intellectuals, and political figures. A young Chico Buarque, on the cusp of a storied career as one of Brazil's most celebrated singer-songwriters ('The Bob Dylan of Brazil'), came to dinner one night, bringing his guitar. Fernando Enrique Cardoso, a university colleague in São Paulo, would later become Brazil's 34th president.

In 1973 Doug joined the faculty at Ohio State University's Department of Agricultural Economics and Rural Sociology, and also assumed the directorship of OSU's Latin American Studies Program. He would remain at Ohio State until his retirement in 2001. Doug had a catholic range of intellectual interests and reinvented himself several times during his academic career. The early years focused on Brazilian topics: slavery, migration, and race relations as they related to economic development. Later themes were more global in scope. His writings on the world food economy touched on issues of globalization, environmental degradation, population growth, and food security. His work in the field of rural finance explored the many challenges attending the creation of national development banks. In rural

micro-finance, the focus was on creating small-scale credit programs crafted for individuals and cooperatives in rural areas. In this last area, Doug and his colleagues were among the first to formally recognize that the success of these enterprises often hinges on empowering women.

It was a productive career, both in terms of output—four books, six edited titles, and many dozens of book chapters, articles and monographs—and legacy. He and his graduate students undertook research projects in scores of countries, from remote jungle villages to bustling capitals, in Europe, Asia, Central America, and sub-Saharan Africa. Many of these protégés would achieve career success in universities, governments, The World Bank, The Gates Foundation, The International Monetary Fund, and a variety of think tanks and non-profits across four continents. It was a legacy Doug took great pride in.

A voracious reader, Doug would typically have multiple documents in mid-review, and would surround himself, nest-like, with stacks of printed material: books, journals, manuscripts, newspapers. When his home office could no longer contain the accumulation, it spread to other living spaces, and whenever he traveled, so too would an abridged selection, sometimes requiring its own luggage. True to the professorial stereotype, his absent-mindedness was legendary, and stories of Doug's 'incidents' were a perennial source of amusement to those close to him. In later years, he would elevate into an art form his absent-mindedness, irascibility, hearing difficulty, and a tendency to lapse into verbose lectures on arcane topics. Impersonations of him in this mode became a cottage industry among members of his family, especially his sons.

Doug delighted in following the exploits of his seven grandchildren, even dipping a toe into the world of social media to keep abreast of their activities. The only other pursuit that animated him in a comparable way—and on

certain days it can safely be said, more so—was following the fortunes of his beloved Patriots and Ohio State Buckeyes. The anxious anticipation of big games, the shared excitement and analysis—and sometimes commiseration—that attended them had an invigorating effect on him, especially later in life. When this passion began to fade, it was as true an indicator of his decline as any medical diagnosis. Losing Jane, his partner of 63 years, to Parkinson's disease only hastened it.

In his final days, although frustrated by his weakened cognitive and physical condition—a poignant contrast to the man he was in his prime—Doug readily accepted his fate. He appreciated what a blessing it was to be at life's end having no regrets, and took comfort in knowing the legacy he would leave behind in the hearts and memories of those who knew him.

On a crisp fall morning, with a new football season underway, Doug closed the book on a full life.

Doug is preceded in death by Jane, and his sister Nancy (Charles) Brown. He is survived by his children, Doug Jr. (Beth), Cristina (Paul) Nagy, Geoffrey (Jessica), Andrew (Heriona), and cherished grandchildren David, Connor, Will, Kate, Ian, Bjorn, and Maddie.

Tribute Wall

SS

“ Just came across this page while surfing the internet. I'm truly sorry to hear that Prof. Graham passed away. I took a Development Economics class with him when I was a graduate student at Ohio State. He was a great teacher and a very nice man. I will remember him very fondly. May he rest in peace.

Serdar Sayan
Professor of Economics and
Board Member, Turkish Economic Association
Dean, Graduate School of Social Sciences and
Director, Center for Social Policy Research (SPM)
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Serdar Sayan - March 05, 2025 at 07:29 AM

JD

“ My condolences to the Graham family. As a staff member in the Department of Agricultural, Environmental, and Development Economics, I truly enjoyed working with Doug. He will be missed.

Janice DiCarolis - October 18, 2024 at 03:02 PM

GN

“ Dr. Graham was my Ph.D. supervisor from 1993 to 1997. I will always remember him as a very enlightening economist and a great man, full of humanity. I will be forever grateful to Dr. Graham for teaching me everything I needed to know about being a good professor. My deepest condolences to his family. Genevieve Nguyen

Genevieve Nguyen - October 10, 2024 at 04:56 AM



“ 6 files added to the tribute wall



Bruce E. Brown - October 03, 2024 at 10:34 AM



Douglas Hume Graham was a force of nature. His parents, Mortimer Elliott Graham and Grace Esculene Budd certainly had their hands full with Doug & his sister, Nancy Lee, my mother. His educational achievements and lifetime contributions to society are nearly singular in comparison to humanity. His wife Alva Jane Castillo & their children were an integral part of my upbringing. Seriously ,having to prepare to sit down at the dinner table with uncle Doug was like studying for a final exam! He and Jane are sadly missed but will be remembered forever. God bless them, from the Brown family.

Bruce E. Brown - October 03, 2024 at 11:06 AM



Please review the full tribute to Douglas Hume Graham on the Rutherfordfuneralhomes.com site.

Bruce E. Brown - October 03, 2024 at 11:07 AM