

Olavi (Ole) Rudolf Holsti

August 7, 1933 ~ July 2, 2020

Olavi (Ole) Rudolf Holsti born August 7th, 1933 in Geneva, Switzerland died July 2nd, 2020 in his home in Salt Lake City, Utah after a long battle with lymphoma. Ole was born to Rudolf and Liisa Holsti. Rudolf Holsti served in Finland's foreign ministry and as the ambassador to the League of Nations until he and his family immigrated to the United States in 1941. Invited by former President Herbert Hoover, his father taught in the Department of Political Science at Stanford University until his death in 1945. When Ole's mother was hospitalized in 1943 with tuberculosis he was graciously raised by the Keesing family until he graduated from Palo Alto High School.

Ole received a BA degree from Stanford University in 1954, a MAT from Wesleyan University in 1956, and a PhD in Political Science from Stanford University in 1962. Ole taught at Stanford from 1962-67 before joining his brother, Dr. Kal Holsti, in the Department of Political Science at the University of British Columbia. In 1974, he accepted a position at Duke University as the George V. Allen Professor. He was the departmental chairman from 1978-83, and was named Emeritus Professor in 2010. He was known for his writings on international affairs, American foreign policy, content analysis, decision making in politics and diplomacy, and crises. He immensely enjoyed teaching and was proud to receive two undergraduate teaching awards, a lifetime achievement award from the American Political Science Association, and a teacher-scholar award from the International Studies Association. Ole was also remembered for his many opinionated letters to the editor.

Ole married Annolee Wood in 1953 after they met working at Yosemite National Park. He and Ann had two children, Eric Lynn Holsti, who died prematurely of Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy, and his daughter, Dr. Maija Holsti. His wife, Ann died in 2006. Shortly after retiring from Duke in 2010, Ole moved to Salt Lake City to live near Maija, his son-in-law, Brad Anderson, and his two grandchildren, Aksel and Mikko.

Ole was passionate about running and race walking. He attended many running races, wrote for Running Journal, and completed 43 marathons, including 9 Boston Marathons. Despite slowing down due to his lymphoma, Ole continued to walk daily around the neighborhoods of Chapel Hill and Salt Lake City. He was recognized by his Boston Marathon jacket, Duke hat, and friendly smile. Even when faced with health difficulties, he never complained and showed much gratitude for his life. He lived simply, focused on the present, and had hope for the future into his final days. Ole much appreciated his excellent medical care and his family. Ole’s favorite Finnish word was “sisu” which describes him well. The meaning of “sisu” is “extraordinary determination in the face of extreme adversity, and courage that is presented typically in situations where success is unlikely.” Due to CoVid, his life will be celebrated on Zoom. In lieu of flowers, please donate to Hematologic Cancers at the Huntsman Cancer Institute in Ole’s memory. (https://give.huntsmancancer.org/page/17369/donate/1)