Roger Brooke Hopkins

March 25, 1942 ~ July 31, 2013

Brooke Hopkins, acclaimed English professor, energetic adventurer, blues and jazz lover, father and friend, passed away July 31 in his Salt Lake City home. He was 71.

Roger Brooke Hopkins was born March 25, 1942, in Baltimore, where he attended Calvert and Gilman schools. He also attended Hotchkiss, in Lakeville, CT, where he first discovered his love of British literature. He earned a B.A. (1964) and Ph.D. (1970) in English from Harvard University, where he also taught for five years. His academic training included a year on fellowship at Oxford.

He began teaching at the University of Utah in 1975, where he met another new faculty member, Margaret Battin (known as Peggy), who would become his wife in 1986. Brooke remained at the U for the rest of his career, earning accolades and awards for his teaching and writing. His primary field was Romantic poetry, including Wordsworth, Keats, Byron and Shelley, although he also explored the genre of autobiography, issues in psychoanalysis, and many other areas.

Hopkins' tall frame, crop of red hair and thick, bushy eyebrows were familiar sights in the halls of the English Department. He was a popular professor and won many teaching awards, including the University of Utah Distinguished Teaching Award; he was also selected as University Professor. He was also a visionary leader who became department chair and helped launch the school's writing program.

Brooke loved traveling the world with Peggy and friends, trekking in the Himalayas, whipping up a gourmet meal or enthusiastically dancing in blues bars. His cooking and hospitality were legendary.

Shortly after retiring, Hopkins was injured in a double-bike accident, which left him paralyzed from the neck down. Despite the constraints of life in a wheelchair, perpetual respiratory problems, and sometimes severe pain, he was able to teach ten OSHER courses to mostly retired professionals in his living room, including The Iliad, The Odyssey, The Aeneid, The Divine Comedy, The Canterbury Tales, Moby Dick, and Thoreau's Walden. These courses became a graceful and heartfelt capstone to his career. Together with Peggy, Brooke wrote an extensive account of the challenges and deep insights in facing quadriplegia, Love Under Trial, an early version of which is available at www.brookeandpeggy.blogspot.com

He is survived by his wife, his sister Lisa Hopkins Wheeler, stepchildren Michael Battin and Sara Battin Pearson, and four grandchildren, Kendra Battin, Jack Battin, Maxwell Pearson, Sydney Pearson, and niece Isabelle Hopkins Wheeler.

A memorial service will be held August 25 at 5 p.m. in Libby Gardner Hall, on the University of Utah campus.