



Remembering Donald Kennedy's
Legacy of Service
Spring 2020



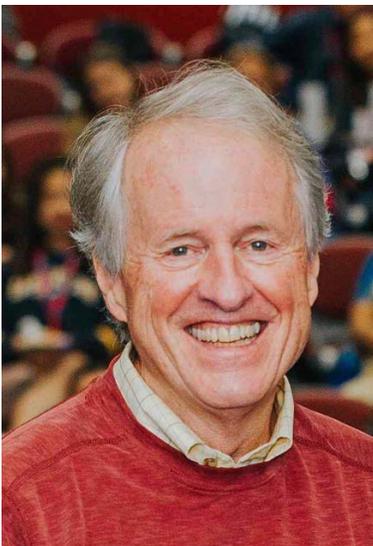
“Don Kennedy was a remarkable person. He had a passion for making the world a better place and for encouraging each of us to ‘make a difference.’ Don and I worked as partners for over 12 years to build and expand the Haas Center for Public Service, to create Stanford in Washington, and to create and build Campus Compact. I am blessed to have been his friend.”

– *Catherine H. Milton, Founding Director of the Haas Center for Public Service; Senior Advisor, Cardinal Careers*



“Don had the ability to make each person in conversation with him feel like talking with you was the most important thing he had to do that day. Much of what I value about Stanford – our work at the Haas Center, our efforts to be a good partner locally and beyond, a commitment to quality scholarship and teaching – are all part of Don’s legacy. Indeed, his memory is a blessing.”

– *Anna Waring, PhD '95, Senior Program Director, Haas Center for Public Service*



“There is so much to say about Don. For me he was an inspiration, a wonderfully encouraging, courageous leader, and collaborative partner in our work to bring public service and service-learning to Stanford through the Haas Center and to higher education more broadly through Campus Compact, which he co-founded.

Would the Haas Center exist today without him? In some way, yes, but probably not as it is. I am very sad, but also full of countless memories of watching Don lead Stanford to a new level of greatness as a research institution that took teaching undergraduates seriously, as a diverse and welcoming community, and as one who cared so deeply about Stanford and all of us—staff, students, faculty and alums—who are part of it. He never ceased encouraging in all of us our best and most generous qualities.”

– *Timothy K. Stanton, PhD, Senior Engaged Scholar, Ravensong Associates; former Associate Director and Director, Haas Center for Public Service (1985-99)*



Donald Kennedy with students at the Public Service Center, which became the Haas Center for Public Service.

“From Don Kennedy, I learned how to really love Stanford and how to make a difference in the world.

I remember early in my freshman year when Madera House was coordinating the Maderathon, my dormmates and I awoke at dawn and ran to his house for a photo opportunity as he was taking off for his regular run to the Dish. When I got involved in the Public Service Center (now the Haas Center for Public Service), I witnessed his incredible commitment to making public service central to the Stanford brand. He welcomed students and staff to his office in Building 10 for strategy sessions and opened up Hoover House for meetings and events. His signature commitment to show up and listen with intention is seen in this photo from 1985 on the steps of the Public Service Center. Quite simply, he loved service and he understood like few others the role of higher education in society.

He made things happen by inspiring and trusting the team. In my 20-plus years of service as a member of the Stanford staff, Don Kennedy stands out as a willing advisor and a caring friend. His smile and guidance always signaled that we could make seemingly impossible things happen. His spirit lives on in all whom he touched.”

– Megan Swezey Fogarty, '86, Associate Vice President for Community Engagement, Stanford University



“Don Kennedy was an incredible leader, educator, mentor, friend, and role model. He literally changed my life with his great caring, commitment, and wise counsel. He even hosted Liz’s and my wedding, an act of unforgettable kindness and grace. He will live forever with all of us and in the Steyer family Hall of Fame. We will always treasure Don.”

– *Jim Steyer, '78, JD '83, Founder and Chief Executive Officer, Common Sense Media*

“Don Kennedy was a true mentor to so many, including me. I have Don to thank for his vision in starting the Human Biology program, the Haas Center for Public Service, and the John Gardner Fellowship. Each of these programs has had a huge influence on my life, and Don was instrumental in launching all of them. In addition to all he contributed professionally, he was warm and accessible to students, even inviting us to join him on his morning runs. He will be missed!”

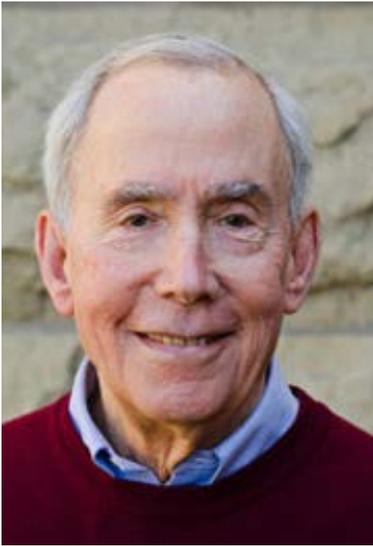
– *Liz Butler Steyer, '86, JD '91, Executive Director, Athletic Scholars Advancement Program*

“In coming of age at Stanford, I was deeply inspired by the unflagging commitment to public service that was so central to Don Kennedy’s tenure as president. His leadership and mentorship made a huge difference to my career choices and overall outlook on citizenship and social responsibility. It was only some years later that I came to understand how exceptional it was for the president of a university of Stanford’s prestige to assign such high priority to public service and to commit real resources to the task. The Haas Center would not be here today without Don—and his legacy will live in the thousands of Stanford students whose sense of civic duty and devotion to public service carry forward his vision.”

– *Goodwin Liu, '91, Associate Justice, California Supreme Court*

“I had the pleasure of interviewing former President Kennedy for the Stanford Quad yearbook in person my senior year. He told me something I will never forget: the secret of Stanford was that we students taught each other. That has resonated so profoundly over these years because when I think back to my years at Stanford, I think of the dynamism of my peers. This has continued to inspire me for decades; whenever I feel unmotivated or frustrated, I think of that incredible energy I was surrounded by for four years. Thank you, Pres. Kennedy, for being so generous to acknowledge the students as an equal part of the education we received at Stanford!”

– *Sonja Srinivasan, '95*



“Don was a most remarkable man, and it was my great privilege to know and admire him as a mentor and friend.

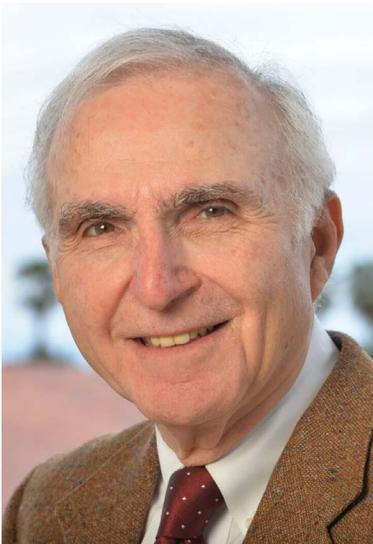
He was also the finest leader of any university I have ever known. He brought to that role at Stanford a deep commitment to mentoring others, and I was one of the lucky ones he chose to mentor. He had a special knack of making each of us feel that he could not imagine anything more important than taking time to counsel us. He touched every part of the university, and he brought an infectious enthusiasm to everything he touched, brimming with good cheer and good ideas.

A commitment to public service was a lifetime part of Don’s identity. He made public service a noble calling in the minds of students and others alike.

Don had a unique gift of fusing wisdom and humor. I often used quotes from him in talks I gave at Indiana University and elsewhere. One quip that I am credited with on Google, I am reasonably sure, actually came from Don: ‘A college education should equip one to entertain three things: a friend, an idea, and oneself.’

Over time, Don became a dear friend, and I cherished my friendship with him. He was a life force that made richer my life and the lives of countless others.”

– *Tom Ehrlich, Adjunct Professor, Stanford Graduate School of Education; former president of Indiana University, provost of the University of Pennsylvania, and dean of Stanford Law School*



“It has been widely and appropriately noted that Don loved spending time with undergraduates. In my nearly 50 years at Stanford, it is clear that no other Stanford president in that period had such a close relationship with undergrads. What may be less well known is his close relationship with the faculty. Since the very first time I met him, he never failed to greet me with a big smile and a warm welcome. His passing causes me great sadness, but I do have those big smiles and warm welcomes to hang on to.”

– *Leonard Ortolano, UPS Foundation Professor of Civil Engineering in Urban and Regional Planning, Stanford University*



“I adored Don Kennedy. Unfortunately, I did not know him as a student. In fact, I don’t know that I ever met Don until I came back to Stanford as a staffer in 2001. So I really only came to know him as an administrator—but how lucky I am that I did!

Robin says that it was hard not to love Don. And I would have to agree entirely. My favorite memories are both mundane and sweet. Don used to frequent the Alumni Center Café at lunch time when he was hanging his hat at Encina Hall. Many times, I would ask if I could join him for lunch—and every time he would respond affirmatively. These short LWD - Lunches With Don - became wonderful elements of my life at Stanford. I would listen with rapt attention to the stories he shared and the wisdom that was present in so much of what he said. At times, when I saw a student I knew walk by our table, I would introduce them to Don. And each time—much to Don’s embarrassment and chagrin—I would tell them that Don was not only a faculty member emeritus, but Stanford’s eighth president. These were such simple times together. But they were wonderfully sweet and authentic. I thought of these get-togethers as having lunch with a Stanford icon; Don, I would guess, thought of them simply as two guys having lunch.

We all hope we leave a mark on the world. Don’s mark is broad and deep. And, as I read the countless social posts since his passing was announced, it is clear that our alumni all over the world not only recognize the mark that Don left at Stanford, but the genuine, authentic, warm, passionate, inclusive way in which he left that mark. He was a special man in so many ways—he will be missed deeply.”

– Howard E. Wolf, '80, Vice President for Alumni Affairs;
President, Stanford Alumni Association, Stanford University



“He meant so much to so many of us. ... He knew us by name; he cared about us so much. ... I love you, Don Kennedy, and I’m grateful to you. You saw me and believed in me when I didn’t yet believe in myself, and I will never forget that.”

[Video](#)

– Julie Lythcott-Haims, '89, author; former Associate Vice Provost for Undergraduate Education and Dean of Freshmen and Undergraduate Advising, Stanford University



“Don Kennedy was an extraordinary person, leader, and university president. But most of all, he had a deep affection for students and for public service.

When I wanted to initiate a public service program at Foothill College, Don graciously took time from his presidential duties to visit our campus and give a presentation on the value of public service or service-learning. The focus on service-learning continues at Foothill to this day.

I also had the profound honor and pleasure to serve on the Board of Trustees during Don’s presidency. It was an exceptional experience, particularly because it was during one of Stanford’s most tumultuous times, whether it was the indirect cost recovery issue, or the 1989 earthquake, or whether to offer benefits to domestic partners, or how to divest in South Africa. However, Don was unwavering in his dedication to Stanford and keeping in mind what was best for the University.

He once wrote, ‘Don’t let the urgent preempt the important,’ which were words to live by then, as they are now, particularly during this pandemic. Don would remind us again, to really focus on the important, and that is the legacy that I will continue to remember.”

– Bernadine Chuck Fong, ’66, MA ’68, PhD ’83, Director of Leadership Initiatives, Office of the Vice Provost for Graduate Education; President Emeritus, Foothill College; former Senior Managing Partner, Carnegie Foundation for the Advancement of Teaching

“Fast forward 1975 to 2020, and Don would likely be teaching a Hum Bio seminar on ‘Pandemics.’ ‘Taking into consideration both the medical and economic impact of this virus,’ he might say, ‘how should WE—as public policymakers—address the major issues’—and then the kicker: ‘as they arise?’

We are Don’s human biology students. We know how to unpack this—and we love the fast-paced discussion and debate that ensues. As a result of Don’s persistent and provocative questions, I’m sure he’d have helped guide us to a solid, well-thought-out plan of action.

Today, after I received this sad news, I couldn’t help but think we’d somehow failed him; that despite his teachings, we failed to make Don-like ‘no-brainer’ choices that could have curtailed this pandemic.

It’s only too obvious that we need many, many Don Kennedys—and many of his human biology programs—if the human race is to survive in the future.”

– Anne R. Peterson, ’76, MSc ’81



“I wonder if most of us who were lucky enough to have had Don as a mentor had the same experience: you went to him with an elaborate idea to improve the world. Amazingly, he didn’t call the idea too big, too complicated, or too hard. Instead he got a twinkle in his eye and said, ‘How can I help?’ Soon thereafter he surreptitiously sent you out on a daunting quest to test your mettle and prepare you for bigger tasks ahead. Don was a virtuoso mentor—demanding and gentle, brilliant and funny, stalwart and enthusiastic.

Once, as an undergraduate, I was fundraising for a project for what was then called the Public Service Center (now the Haas Center). At the time, Don was the president of Stanford and the Center was under the auspices of his office. My fundraising letter went to the deans of all of Stanford’s schools. I can now admit that my writing style at the time tended toward self-righteous. One of the deans took issue with being shaken down by an undergraduate using Don’s stationery and penned a very long, and aggrieved, letter of dissatisfaction. Horrified, I went to apologize to Don for causing trouble. He didn’t get mad. With a mischievous grin, Don said, ‘Well it looks like Dean X is unlikely to contribute money to your project; on the other hand, it also looks like Dean X has way too much time on his hands. I bet he’ll contribute in other ways.’ And he did.

Don was the first person to make me understand that my ability to do good in the world was limited only by my own imagination. I don’t know enough words to describe how blessed and honored I have been to be guided by him. I doubt any of us do, but I hope that, in his memory, we will all redouble our efforts to answer his call to serve and to mentor others with his extraordinary example as our guide.”

– Sarah C. von der Lippe, ’85, civil rights lawyer, Washington, D.C.



“Like so many other Stanford students, I have a vivid memory of sitting in Memorial Auditorium as a new college freshman hearing Don tell us that being at Stanford was both a privilege and a responsibility to make a difference in the world. That sentiment lodged in my heart and has been the north star to my whole career.

Unlike most of my classmates, however, I had the unique experience of working directly for Don as soon as I graduated as Hoover House Manager. I got to experience the full force of his brilliance and his humor. I still remember a staff meeting when he not only caught a fly out of the air, but he also gave a very entertaining lecture on the biology of how he could predict the fly’s trajectory.

Watching him lead the University through the indirect-costs crisis taught me lessons about leadership that I could barely absorb at the time but have often reflected on later. He was a gift to the University and to me personally.”

– *Kate Kershner Cochran, '89*



“When I heard about the passing of Donald Kennedy, I felt shock and overwhelming sadness, even though I did not actually know him personally. Reading about his tenure at Stanford, I realized how much he was responsible for the most treasured and memorable aspects of my undergraduate experience, most especially the people I met through them.

The Haas Center for Public Service was my center, my community, my people in college. Attending Stanford in Washington was one of the most impactful influences on my educational and career choices and lifelong friendships. Majoring in an interdisciplinary field such as public policy continues to shape my work, my parenting, and my way of being in the world as I seek to engage all within my sphere of influence to be involved in their communities and in our political system, including my own children.

Thank you, Don Kennedy, for having the courage and foresight to encourage our campus and student body to face outwards, to emphasize the humanities and our responsibility to others. I will be forever grateful that you were ‘my president’ at Stanford.”

– *Bernadette Chi, '91, independent consultant*



“While I know Don Kennedy was special to so many, he holds a particularly special place in the hearts of Stanford’s Class of ’91. At our 25th class reunion a couple of years ago, he attended our class lunch and was made an honorary member of our class because we just loved him so much! Through his vision, leadership, approachability, public addresses, and interactions with students, he inspired many in my class to pursue careers in public service and ingrained in us a core value of being public servants—contributing back in meaningful ways to society.”

– Joann Wong, '91, Program and Organizational Effectiveness Director, Haas Center for Public Service



“While I was at the National Academies in the late 1990s, I had the pleasure of watching and experiencing the way Donald Kennedy chaired meetings of Science Educators. He was a masterful facilitator, focusing a discussion, enabling people to voice diverse views, and ultimately bringing the group to consensus on the topic or issue at hand. This was during the era of the first National Science Education Standards, and while I cannot recall the specific substance of the meetings, I do know that they were productive professionally and enjoyable for participants. His obvious joy in working with people and desire to improve education at all levels compelled the whole group forward. While I had known Dr. Kennedy as a well-liked professor as an undergraduate in the 1960s, it was my experiences when I crossed paths with him decades later that will always stick in my memory.”

– Karen Christensen Hollweg, '64, MA '66



“Don and I walked through a garden together at his residence a couple of years ago. He had been working hard towards his recovery and emanated the warmth many of us know well. I mentioned an idea for projects to try with my classes the following semester and, without missing a beat, Don posed a few key questions that helped me bring the bigger picture into focus. The man couldn’t help but encourage and support those around him.

I first met Don as a senior embarking on my honors thesis. He led our research seminar with good humor and made sure we had the resources we needed: time, reassurance, faculty introductions, etc. He and I would meet up around campus for years afterward to chat about everything—from clean energy and bird flight, to love and building a meaningful life. There’s a hidden doorway somewhere on campus with pencil marks along the frame for every member of the Stanford family. Don’s name is somewhere near the top, always encouraging us to grow.”

– Nick McIntyre '12, MS '14, STEM teacher, Galveston ISD



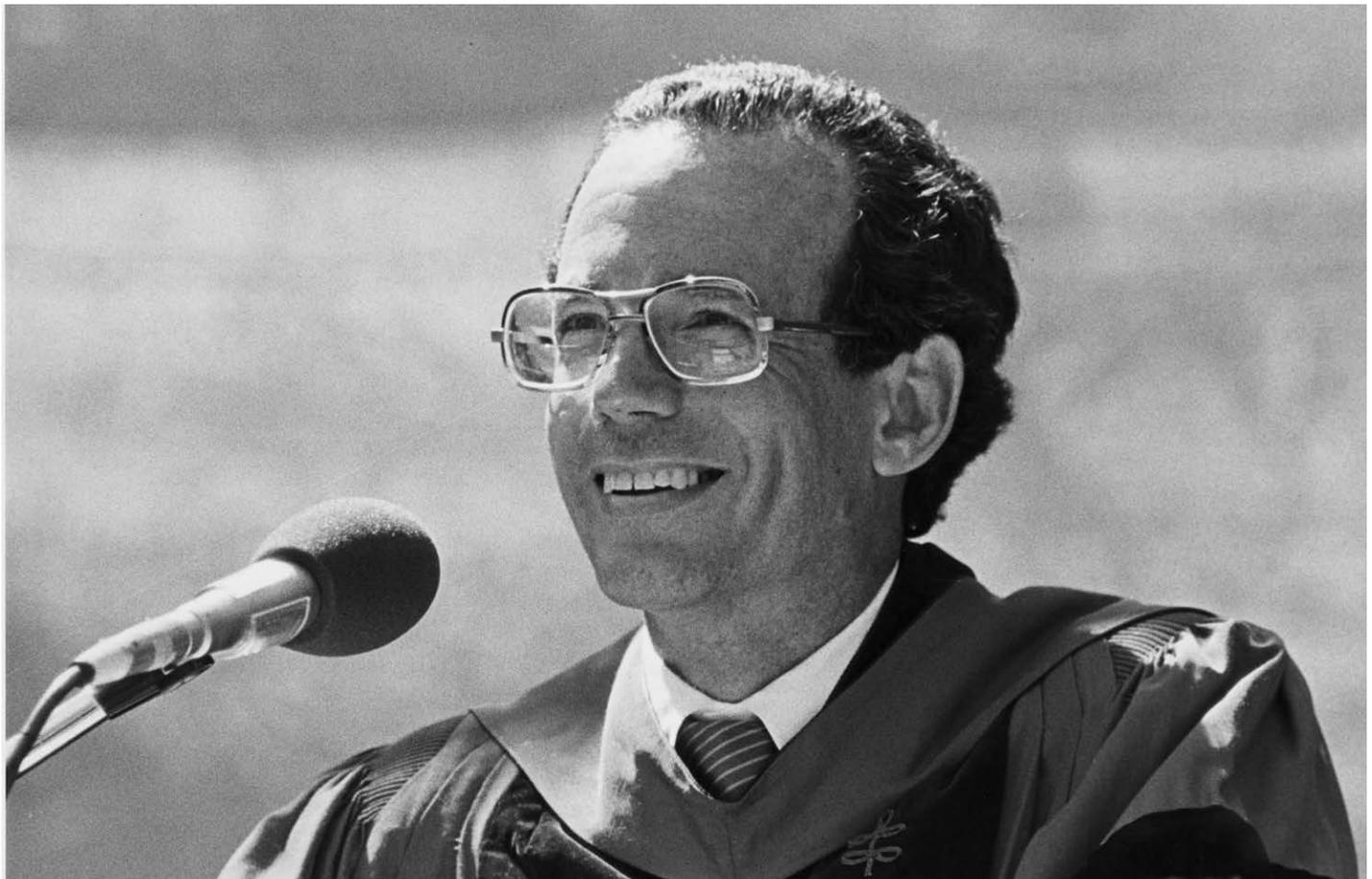
“Don Kennedy’s legacy at Stanford is multifarious, but one of the most luminous and lasting of his contributions is the founding of the Haas Center for Public Service and the infusing of Stanford’s student culture with an ethos of public service. New to the Haas staff, I first met Don Kennedy at the June 1995 celebration for graduating seniors. Characteristically modest, he described his role to me as ‘more of a midwife’ than a founder.

His partnership with Catherine Milton, which included the recruitment of John W. Gardner as the first Miriam and Peter Haas Centennial Professor in Public Service, led not only to a flowering of service at Stanford but to a national movement in higher education through the establishment of Campus Compact.

Don Kennedy cared deeply about students. He shared with John Gardner the gift of making every person feel valued and heard, sending each mentee on their way inspired to be true to themselves, and to act for the public good. We owe him an immeasurable debt of gratitude for his contributions to the university and the nation. Godspeed on your journey, Don, and thank you for your presence among us.”

– Suzanne Abel, Senior Advisor, Haas Center for Public Service

Photo: Chuck Painter





“Don invited me to visit with him shortly after I arrived at Stanford, and I’ll never forget that meeting. I was meeting someone who I admired greatly and whose actions and words had deeply influenced my views on the purpose of higher education. But the real reason that meeting was unforgettable was that, in the span of 60 minutes, he was able to share some of the best guidance I’ve ever received. He was a visionary and a listener.

We will miss him dearly, and the Haas Center is fortunate to have our main meeting room named after him. He’ll be with us as we develop new visions for the future, and as future generations of public service leaders gather to listen to each other.”

– *Tom Schnaubelt, Associate Vice Provost for Education and Executive Director, Haas Center for Public Service*



“I was a lost, wandering, undeclared freshman when at a lunch, Don Kennedy chatted briefly with me about the Human Biology major. A few days later, I ran into him on the Dish; he stopped his run, greeted me warmly and asked me if I’d been by the Hum Bio office yet! He was so kind and so excited about it, I didn’t want to let him down. I went Hum Bio and it was a great decision!

Don Kennedy inspired and shaped countless students in the 1980s and over the many years he was a beloved leader of the Stanford community. I suspect that each person he touched felt the same as I did, that he truly cared.”

– *Katie Hanna Dickson, ’84, National Advisory Board, Haas Center*



“Donald Kennedy was a remarkable man who left many legacies at Stanford—but for me, the most important was his commitment to public service and ensuring that service to others became a core part of the Stanford experience. He started that initiative when I was in student government and brought Catherine Milton in to spearhead it. The enduring vitality of the public service program is a direct result of Don’s energy, vision for Stanford, and ability to inspire others.”

– *Peter S. Spivack, ’84, Partner, Hogan Lovells U.S. LLP*



“I’ll always remember Don for his infectious energy and enthusiasm for public service. As a student, I was at a talk where he said that young people were likely to get bigger responsibilities sooner in public service—in other words, you’d be able to start changing the world right away. That really appealed to me and helped point me to service as a career.

I more or less grew up in the Haas Center. Don’s unwavering support to Catherine Milton and all of us was instrumental to making it happen. When I started the East Palo Alto Stanford Summer Academy, Don invested the first \$2,500 from the President’s office to get us started. At graduation I was on stage to get an award for service. Don had a huge smile for me when he shook my hand. I felt that if he had confidence in me, then I should too.

And he was right about service careers. In my first year after graduation I worked on a big project, launching a national-model corps to help marginalized young people get educated and find jobs. I was in over my head, learning fast, making a difference, and loving it. Thank you, Don.”

– Lorne Needle, '87, MBA '92, Google, Redwood City, California

“I was a very lost Stanford undergraduate—tried to change my major five times!— and suffering horribly from eating disorders and general undergraduate angst, when Don took me under his wing and helped me forget about all the life choices I had to make by engaging me in the joy of learning. I was so fortunate to be one of the early Human Bio majors. We gave our professors in that program, including Don, standing ovations on a daily basis. What I learned in that program is with me every day, as a citizen, an entrepreneur, and a designer.

We connected a few times since I graduated many decades ago. He was there to congratulate me when my company went public. Many people were, but he is one of the people who had developed in me a strong commitment to using business to build community and shared experiences, to ensure that any activity I undertook would have to pass the test of making the world a better place. While the form of that contribution has changed from my 20s to my 30s and 40s to my 60s, I had in Don a role model for life-long contributions that change in form, but not in motivation.”

– Candice Carpenter Olson, '75



(L-R): Leslie Saul Garvin, Lorne Needle, Catherine Milton, Donald Kennedy, Megan Swezey Fogarty, and Robin Kennedy.
Photo courtesy of Leslie Saul Garvin

“Don was a brilliant scientist, an engaging educator, and a visionary leader at Stanford and at the helm of the FDA. His impact on Stanford and on my own life was profound. The Public Service Center and Stanford in Washington, two of his contributions, were the defining elements of my Stanford education.

My memories, however, are centered on the warmth and generosity that he and Robin extended to students and friends: Thanksgiving dinner for students who were not able to go home; the offer of a few weeks’ refuge at Hoover House; encouragement in times of discouragement; and mostly, the simple joy of gathering to prepare a meal and exchanging banter and laughter with the family.

Don’s graciousness was, for me, his defining characteristic. Even in the last couple of years when his memory failed him, he extended the most gracious welcome to visitors. I’m delighted that in my current role at the Haas Center, I have the opportunity to help students launch public service careers—one of Don’s strongly held commitments.”

– *Leslie Saul Garvin, '90, Senior Program Director, Cardinal Careers, Haas Center for Public Service*



“President Kennedy taught, by example, what leadership and public service mean. As an undergraduate, I had the great fortune of working with him to set up the Center for Public Service, now the Haas Center.

President Kennedy made us—a group of nervous, enthusiastic, and naive undergraduates—believe our ideas and our voices mattered. He encouraged, prodded, and taught us at every meeting. He asked thoughtful questions that helped us formulate our ideas, he listened carefully, and he provided the support we needed to make our ideas a reality. He was our biggest champion every step of the way.

Stanford’s commitment to public service today is because of Don Kennedy.”

– *Elizabeth Dumanian, '85*

“I am saddened by President’s Kennedy’s death. I only met him once while I was an undergraduate in the 80s. I worked for the Stanford catering company. As I worked jobs, it seemed I was invisible to the guests—except President Kennedy. As I was balancing trays, President Kennedy held the door for me. It was a normal and natural gesture of assistance from one human to another. And yet, he was the only person attending an event I worked who ever did that. So, in fact, it was not such a natural gesture. I’ve remembered it these 25 years, how kind and observant he was. In addition, I always enjoyed hearing him speak.

The Haas Center was a home for me when I worked there my senior year, and it helped launch my career in public service that continues to this day. I am grateful for everything President Kennedy contributed to my experience at Stanford and since my graduation.”

– *Susan Buseck, '84, oncology and school social worker*

“Donald Kennedy was an inspirational mentor to me when I was at Stanford. I have always tried to live up to his ideals of being a ‘citizen scientist.’ He was also a friend and a rock to me when I was going through some difficult times, which I will never forget. The Stanford family will miss him greatly. My deepest sympathy to Robin and the rest of his family.”

– *Heather Allen, '72*



“Professor Donald Kennedy was a great educator, not only because of his brilliant mind and flair for the dramatic, but also because he could teach lifelong lessons with simple gestures.

I was one of the first two teaching assistants in the newly formed Program in Human Biology. Professor Kennedy, so instrumental in the program’s founding, would sometimes attend advisory or strategic planning meetings. I don’t remember the context or the topic, but I do remember a time when I was either presenting a topic or discussing an issue with the overly enthusiastic, overly anxious, and worried manner of most young Stanford undergrads. At the peak of my frenzy, Professor Kennedy, who towered over me physically, came up behind me and started to rub my shoulders. In this simple gesture he conveyed ‘calm down, relax, we understand, you got this.’

Stanford students probably never completely lose their compulsive worry or overeager behavior. But during the many stressful challenges I later faced in my career as Deputy Undersecretary of Defense, managing director for the Government Accountability Office Homeland Security division, and head of a congressionally chartered think tank on homeland security, I could still feel Professor Kennedy reaching out to rub my shoulders. I wish I could tell him how much that has helped.”

– *Randall Yim, ’74*

“I never met Don, but he had a profound impact on my life. He inspired me to study and live with greater purpose. His commitment to public service made an indelible impact on Stanford and so many of us. May all his loved ones know how grateful I am to him and them.”

– *Leela Stake, BA, MA ’03, senior partner at FleishmanHillard; member, Haas Center National Advisory Board*

“I am so grateful to have been inspired by President Kennedy (as I knew him) in my years at Stanford (1986-1990). From the first time I saw him as an impressionable frosh, he honored the calling of public service. His mix of brilliance, humility, and humor was amazing to be around as a Hum Bio student, and how cool it was that he invited students to run the Dish with him. I don’t know what karma enabled me to be in rooms with him and John Gardner, knowing each’s respect and love for the other. What a tremendous impact President Kennedy leaves in all the ways he shaped Stanford, mentored and supported so many. My deepest condolences to his family.”

– *Srija Srinivasan, ’90, MBA ’95, Deputy Chief, San Mateo County Health*

“It is always a joy to praise someone as opposed to like Caesar bury
Memories of being on the Stanford Board with Don with me I will always carry
From my first meeting in the summer of 1980 in a special session
To make findings of fact on H. Bruce Franklin’s attempted Comp Sci Building secession
To the Hospital Modernization Plan and Indirect Reimbursement Audit
Don was a man whose character and actions were worthy of plaudit
Under his tenure Stanford was a leader in investing endowment directly and indirectly in venture capital funds
As Silicon Valley and 3000 Sand Hill Road took off like rockets, it was an alternative investment class
we did not shun
Never had the pleasure of knowing him as a student, which in reading memories seems a major loss
Only as a Trustee to see him tackle issues facing the University never to over gloss
A memory that will stick with me forever at Trustee University functions when it was necessary to
through the crowd move
Don behind me with his hand on my shoulder behind me in a soft voice ‘I’ll follow your block find me
the exit groove’
Can’t believe a man of such intellect and energy has passed
Leaving behind contributions to society and Stanford that will always last”

– Michael P. Ridley, '69, AKA the Alaskanpoet

Photo: Stanford News Service





“I had the privilege and honor as an undergraduate to work for several years in Don Kennedy’s lab, sticking electrodes into crayfish neurons. He was an incredible mentor, listener, and wise counselor.

I remember one conversation sitting in his office my senior year as I was trying to decide what to do with my life. I had the sense that he was hoping I’d go to graduate school in biology, and I was leaning toward medical school. His words were something to the effect of, ‘Many people will tell you that you should do one thing or another, or tell you not to do something. You have to do what is right for you.’ Wise words for a college senior.

As years passed, we’d have lunch or breakfast every time I came back to campus. He had the amazing ability to give you his full attention and the sense that just being with you was a joyful occasion. I’m sure he did that with most of the students he mentored. It was one of his many incredible gifts that changed my life and many others. Bon voyage, Dr. K!”

– Jody McVittie, ’76

“Almost 40 years ago, when I was a nascent PhD student, Don invited me to share a stage with him and speak to new Stanford students at a commencement event. That was the biggest audience I’d ever spoken to—just about the scariest thing I ever did—and an honor I’ll never forget. It gave me strength the day I met my first Intro Biology class (250 students), and many times since. What a privilege it was to know such a wonderful person and exceptional scholar.”

– Kathy S. Williams, ’81, Professor Emerita, Biology, San Diego State University

“I can’t underestimate how Don affected the trajectory of my life. I met him at his annual meet-and-greet for freshmen my first week. A year after he stepped down from the presidency, he became my academic advisor and oversaw my senior thesis. The environmental program he started at Stanford’s Washington, D.C. branch was where I met my wife and got my first real job experience, while the interdisciplinary program he helped create on campus became my major. He was enthusiastic about students, athletics, and everything that’s great about college. He’ll be missed.”

– Bill Faries, ’95, MS ’97



(L-R): Charlie Quinn, Donald Kennedy, William Quinn. Photo courtesy of Charlie Quinn

“Don meant so much to me. I doubt I would have found my extremely rewarding 25-year career at The Nature Conservancy without his mentorship, friendship, and gentle guidance. Or published my *Nature Guide to the Southwest Tahoe Basin*. And just birding and fishing with him, wherever we found ourselves, showed me how much joy could be had in life—in just the simplest of interactions with nature. (Even if you were a famous university president, global political figure, editor of *Science*, and academic powerhouse.)

I still remember my first conversation with ‘DK’ (as we students referred to him): I asked why there was only a bird walk during week five at Stanford Sierra Camp – was it because the birds weren’t here before or after that? He kindly put his hand on my shoulder and said, ‘Charlie, it only happens week five because that’s when I’m here and I like leading bird walks. You need to take Ornithology.’ From then on, Don almost literally took me under his wing. I am so thankful for that. In some ways, ever since then, I think I’ve always felt like I’ve been under his wing. And I don’t think that will change now.

Visiting Don with my brother Willie (’92, MA ’94, MBA ’99) whenever I was down visiting was one of my favorite activities over the past couple decades. We both loved and respected him so much, it was just pure joy to be with him—at first to Jasper Ridge for bird walks, and finally for long chats at Gordon Manor. I feel so privileged to have been a small part of his life during his final few decades.”

Charlie Quinn, ’94, Senior Associate Director of Philanthropy, The Nature Conservancy

“I cannot understate the impact Don Kennedy had on my life, and it wasn’t until so much later that I realized how remarkable it was that the president of a major prestigious research university would have the time, energy, and humanity to personally connect with students like me.

I first met Don when I interviewed him as a newly minted freshman at Stanford. I don’t even remember now how and why the interview came about—what publication or class I was writing the article for and what the topic was. What I do remember was that we immediately hit it off. He is the one who first directed me to the Public Service Center (now the Haas Center for Public Service), introduced me to Catherine Milton (another major influence on my Stanford experience and later life), and encouraged me to channel my energies toward public service. He invited me along to an early meeting of Campus Compact, which led to a summer internship that shaped my understanding of the intersection of scholarship and service, which in turn informed later work I undertook on evidence-based policy-making.

A vignette to give a glimpse into how extraordinary his involvement with students was: As president of Stanford University, Don took the time to write—yes, I kid you not—over 40 letters of introduction for me because I decided that I could not decide on a junior year summer internship until I had truly explored the range of opportunities available in Washington, D.C.!

He had the unique ability to gently guide young people like me along on our journeys of discovery without being patronizing, always opening opportunities, encouraging us to imagine the ‘impossible’ was achievable, and, all the while, helping us learn from our mistakes. He became my model of leadership—intellectually curious, accessible, always learning from anyone in any position, high energy, entrepreneurial, valuing diversity, nonhierarchical. When I met him, I was too young and naive to know that most people in positions of power were not like him. So it wasn’t until years later that I realized my experiences with him throughout my undergraduate years shaped my understanding of power and my own relationship to it. For this, I will always be grateful.”

– Smita Singh, '89, chair of the Board of Directors, Oxfam America; previously founding director of the William and Flora Hewlett Foundation’s Global Development Program

“President Kennedy, as we knew him during our time on the Farm (1984-1989), was integral to our experiences at Stanford. Back then, we didn’t fully appreciate how unique his connection to undergraduates was, but we do now. His genius was making us feel that he felt fortunate to be alongside our journeys, when it was really us who were the lucky ones.

We had opportunities to interact with President Kennedy including through the Haas Center for Public Service and the Men’s Swim Team. He showed us how to lead with grace, intelligence, and humor. We believe Stanford became a more caring and outward-focused institution with the creation of the Haas Center and the John Gardner Public Service Fellowship, both of which he actively championed and we benefited from. But it’s his famous photo with the 1985-86 Men’s Swim Team that our minds immediately went to when we learned of his death. His decision to make good on his challenge to the team to switch attire with them—where he’d pose for a photograph in a swimsuit while the swimmers wore business suits if they won the NCAA Championship for a consecutive year—is the stuff of legend. We got that photo out of our memory books and discussed how our lives were blessed thanks to the time we overlapped with President Kennedy, and indeed how Stanford still benefits from his broad contributions. Our sincere condolences to his family.”

– Gail Mackauf Mosse, '89 (John Gardner Fellow) and Anthony Mosse, '88 (Men’s Swim Team)

“I don’t know why or how, but in his first year as President, Don decided to take a group of frosh advisees (eight of us, I think). We were pretty nervous about it—just entering the President’s Office was powerful, and then he had us all over for dinner at the house. But what mattered most, through the eyes of a student, was that he could not have been more gentle, understanding, and patient. Even before I changed my major nine (nine!) times, I needed patience. Changing my major so much meant I was constantly needing a signature or a meeting. Theoretically, I knew how busy he was, but it never felt that way. He had an ability to focus just on me and make me feel special—and not pathetic—for coming to see him once again. Because, in reality, I was no longer his official advisee—I had declared a major, and then another and then another. But he still made time for me.

More remarkably, he kept in touch and continued to answer my emails and calls as I went to graduate school, became a professor, became a dean and then a college president—where I, of course, took first-year students as advisees. Along the way, I would ask for advice and he remained an amazing counselor. In many ways, I owe my career to his good advice and patient reassurance.

Condoleezza Rice said, ‘Mentors don’t have to look like you,’ and she was right. I knew from the first minute I met him that Don Kennedy had a worldliness that a Latino kid from a public school in Fresno would never have. But he, above all other people I encountered, made me feel that I belonged at Stanford, and eventually that I belonged as an academic and even in the president’s chair. I would never have had that life without him.”

– José Antonio Bowen, '84, '86, '88, '93, former Dean, President, and Don Kennedy advisee; Senior Fellow, Association of American Colleges and Universities (AAC&U)

“To me, Don Kennedy is Stanford. I admired him so much. He didn’t know me but would smile at me anyway. And he instilled in me a never-ending passion for human biology ('89) as well as public service. Oh, and riding a bike around campus. Thank you for modeling so well the core values of the University we love.”

– Betsy Bland, '89, MBA '95

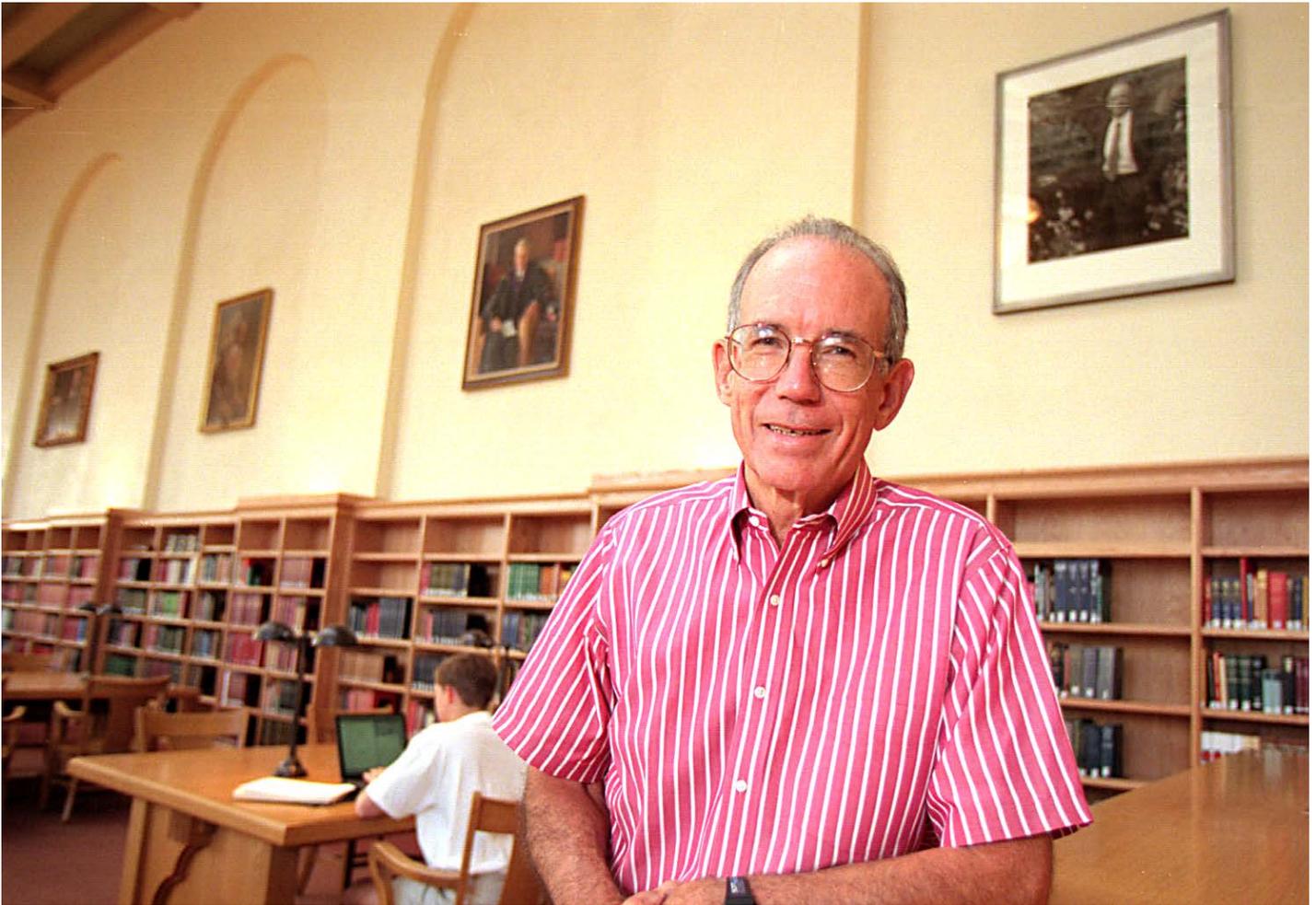


Photo: Linda Cicero

“I remember vividly Don Kennedy delivering a breathtaking speech at a series called ‘What Matters to Me and Why,’ wherein he wove together the urgent need for scientific inquiry and the life of the mind with the ethical imperative to apply these towards the public good. I have treasured that moment when he offered a vision of the university as an essential contributor to the public good.

While he could preach big ideas, Don Kennedy was also a generative presence of many quiet acts of kindness, of paying attention to individuals and encouraging others to shine their light. He seemed to delight in a university firmament of countless bright stars collectively shedding light wherever needed. How wonderful that Don’s legacy endures at the Haas Center for Public Service. I’m grateful to have been a part of it.”

– *Nadinne Cruz, Founding Director of the Public Service Scholars Program; former Haas Center Director*

“When I was 21, you offered wind beneath my wings.

I was on campus riding my bike when I saw the flyer.

WANTED applications for a public service fellowship of “your own design.”

I felt an instant embrace of magic.

The seeds for ‘my own design’ had been planted in many leisurely afternoons as a child in Venezuela pouring over @natgeo magazines. Seeds of wild dreams.

All it took was that open-ended invitation to make me feel that traveling to Nepal to photograph children for a couple of months to create a photo bank for nonprofits serving little ones was actually an attainable possibility.

This at a time before there was even a direct phone line between Kathmandu and Caracas.

The anonymous donor funding the program thought so highly of you that they named it after you. And so my partner in wild dreams @beatrizdelamora and I became recipients of the #donaldkennedy Fellowship for Public Service.

That modest amount of money generously granted was enough for me to catch flight and propelled me into a decade of impact storytelling and the production of more than 2,000 micro-documentaries for organizations in more than 30 countries.

I tell you this because your energy is in every single one of them.

In 1985 you created the #haascenterforpublicservice @stanford

Today it is clearer than ever that if we are to have a chance of co-creating the world of our wildest dreams we need to focus beyond profits and even beyond innovation. Our central shared mission, no matter our field of choice, must be one of service. To each other. To our descendants. To the Earth.

On the afternoon of your passing, my body felt it strongly before I got the news.

A soul connection, my friend said.

Most certainly a soul connection.

May we meet again.

Rest in peace. In beauty. In light. And in service.”

– *Natasha Deganello Giraudie, MA '95*

“I attended Stanford shortly after Donald Kennedy took office. He was extremely active and accessible to the student body. I remember his words during my graduation ceremonies, where he reminded the student body that there is more to life than computers and software, meaning follow your passion and not just the trends in education. Long after graduating, I would at times run into him at the local supermarket and have small chats about Stanford and where it was going. Great president and a good person.”

– *Jorge Freyer, '83*

“I ended up attending four Stanford Commencements in a row: my own in 1987, one to which I took a group of Latino immigrant parents and their middle school children in 1988 to inspire them, my girlfriend’s in 1989, and my brother’s in 1990. It was thrilling each time to hear President Kennedy quote Adlai Stevenson at the end of his remarks, including the invitation to ‘feel the hem of Heaven’ on this most momentous of occasions, and to not forget why we came to Stanford. He added that sentiment matters. Feelings. Emotions. They should not be dismissed, and they can be employed to do good. Donald Kennedy understood that. Just thinking about those words makes me remember how it felt to hear them from a person who knew how to speak them well.

I have kept those Commencement memories of Donald Kennedy all these years.

Then, the week that he, as we say in Spanish, ‘descanso,’ or rested, I learned a new one.

A few years after I graduated, the Haas Center invited me to speak at a fundraiser in Los Angeles. I took my father. I spoke about our immigrant background, and how I was so appreciative that Stanford had continued the job of educating and preparing me for career and life that my parents had begun. It turns out that while I mingled with a number of people after the program, President Kennedy had approached my father, and they talked for the duration of three beverages. I would like to say they were, as President Kennedy so often exhorted us undergraduates to enjoy, EANABS (equally attractive non-alcoholic beverages—yet another memory), but they were not! So I will forever appreciate and remember that such an important man spent that amount of time speaking with the most important man in my life. This is proof that each of us is a person who touches the lives of many. Donald Kennedy did just that, and he was right. Sentiment matters.”

– *David L. Moguel, '87, Professor of Secondary Education,
Michael D. Eisner College of Education, California State University Northridge*

“Don Kennedy was a gem. I had the pleasure, honor, and luck of having Don and Robin as my freshman advisors. They were continually generous and wise as advisers... including letting me live in Hoover House with them one summer (along with “roommate” Cory Booker!). Don was an intellectual bright light and a model public servant, among so many other amazing traits. He made a massively positive mark on the world.”

– Allen Thorpe, '92, Partner, Hellman & Friedman

“Don Kennedy was a wonderful and special person, and I feel so fortunate that he was my professor in Human Biology, as well as a mentor for many years. I kept in touch with him for decades following my graduation, given our many common interests in the intersection of science and social/policy issues, and also distance running. I had the opportunity to first meet him when he was leading and teaching in the Human Biology program. His enthusiasm and energy for science and education were captivating. I remember vividly some of the topics he addressed in his lectures, including basic anatomy, when he jumped up on the lab table at the front of the room to physically illustrate dorsal and ventral sides of mammals. He had a special way of engaging people through his teaching, wisdom, passion for learning, and leadership approach.

I also have a strong memory of my first conversation with Don, which seems small but was significant to me. As a freshman, I approached him at the front of the classroom after the class, feeling somewhat intimidated and shy, to ask him if I could take the midterm before or after the scheduled time because I was invited to run in a women’s cross-country national championship meet in Madison on a day that overlapped with a midterm for the Human Biology class he taught. He literally jumped up enthusiastically and burst out, ‘Hell yes!! That’s wonderful!! Congratulations!!’ Following my return, he asked me about the meet, and it was amazing to me that he took a special interest in supporting budding runners, as well as providing valuable insights and counseling me and so many students about human biology, career paths, and more.”

– L. Ann Thrupp, '80, founder and Principal, Down to Earth Innovations

Back Cover Photo: Doug Plummer



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