

Ted Johnson Obituary – 31 August 2014

Theodore (Ted) Johnson grew up in the Swedish community of Iron Mountain, Michigan, a mining town where he was the son of a local butcher/grocer. His early life included a great love for music as he excelled as a classical pianist as well as playing popular tunes in nightclubs. To the dismay of his piano teacher he earned a scholarship to MIT, where he started studying electrical engineering. Soon thereafter, a diagnosis of tuberculosis landed him in a sanatorium for almost two years, and health concerns led him to finish his engineering degree in the warmer climate of CalTech. He then completed an MBA at the Harvard Business School in 1958. Ted moved back to California and joined the start-up company Digital Equipment Corporation as their tenth employee, and senior vice president of Sales and Service. He enjoyed 25 years with DEC as it catapulted to the number two computer company in the world. He loved traveling to new countries to help set up the international sales force, and treasured the friendships he made along the way. Despite his success, some of his best memories were those spent at the piano - playing classical pieces for himself, or showtunes with friends and family. In 1982, Ted left DEC and became an Angel investor, serving on multiple Boards including Mathsoft, Neogenesis, Gensym, Candela, Passport Systems, and VerdasyS, but he particularly enjoyed helping young businesspeople get a start on pursuing their dreams.

Ted married schoolteacher and Illinois native Ruth Townsend in 1963, and in 1966 they moved to Concord, MA. They raised two children - Justine (Tina), a veterinarian, and Eric, a musician. As a family they traveled to Africa, Europe, and South America and enjoyed many activities together including tennis, skiing, and golf. Ruth passed away in 1994. Ted remarried in 2005 to Riena Spaansen, whom he met in Florida. They enjoyed splitting their time between Martha's Vineyard, Boston, and Florida.

Ted passed away on August 31, at the age of 82, at his home on Martha's Vineyard. He is survived by his wife, his two children, his four grandchildren - Sydney and Phoebe Johnson, and Elsa and Derek Block, and his sister Jean Johnson. In addition to the many contributions Ted made to the business community, Ted leaves a legacy in his children and grandchildren - the love for music, people and travel, which made his own life so rich.