



John Stephen Adams

September 7, 1938 - November 19, 2024

Adams, John Stephen Professor John S. Adams, 86, died November 19, 2024, from plasma cell leukemia. He was at home with his family around him. John was born in Minneapolis on September 7, 1938. His mother, Ellen C. (Cullen) Adams, was born to Irish immigrant parents in Chicago and migrated with her family to Koochiching County, MN, near Littlefork, where her family homesteaded in 1908. His father, Edward F. Adams, was born in Waseca County, MN, and grew up in New Richland. John grew up in southwest Minneapolis, attended Annunciation Catholic School (1952) and DeLaSalle High School, graduating as valedictorian (1956). He received a scholarship to the University of St Thomas where he graduated in 1960 with a BA in Economics, followed by graduate school at the U of MN, receiving his MA (economics and statistics, 1962) and PhD (urban economic geography, 1966). He taught at The Penn State U (1966-70), and then returned to the Department of Geography at the U of MN in 1970, where he taught until retiring in 2007. John's work life began as a paper carrier for the Star Tribune where he learned the lessons of dependability and doing things correctly. Even as a child he was an economist, maintaining cash flow ledgers to monitor the flow of money in (mostly) and out (sometimes). During high school and through college he worked in the produce department at Weber's SuperValu, eventually becoming the produce department manager; he focused on making sure the displays were nicely arranged and that the customers felt appreciated. John was a committed life-long learner who

studied and lived his life in accordance with the mission statement of the University of St Thomas: Inspired by Catholic intellectual tradition, St. Thomas educates students to be morally responsible leaders who think critically, act wisely, and work skillfully to advance the common good. He carried his early life lessons into his professional career and was intensely focused on working to achieve the mission of the University and his department. He was first and foremost a teacher, intent on helping both undergraduate and graduate students achieve their educational goals. He served as doctoral advisor for 119 successful PhD students from around the globe. In 1975, he was a senior Fulbright Lecturer at the Economic University in Vienna; in 1988 he taught at Moscow State University; and spent 1990-91 as a visiting professor at the U.S. Military Academy at West Point. John was drawn into leadership and administration at the University. He served as Chair of the Department of Geography and Senate's Faculty Consultative Committee; director of the School of Public Affairs and of the undergraduate Urban Studies Program; director of the graduate Urban and Regional Planning Program and associate dean in the Humphrey School of Public Affairs. John's engagement with public policy extended beyond academia to civic life, through long involvement with the Citizens League and the Civic Caucus. His research focused on North American cities, urban housing markets and policy, transportation, and regional economic development in the United States and the former Soviet Union. He was a National Science Foundation Research Fellow at the Institute of Urban and Regional Development, UC-Berkeley; economic geographer-in-residence at the Bank of America world headquarters in San Francisco. John's commitment did not end at the University. He made sure to be home every evening precisely at 6:00 pm so that he could enjoy dinner with his family. Dinnertime conversations focused on the day's activities and things going on in the world. John and Judith entertained many over the years at the family cabin on Windigo Lake in Hayward, Wisconsin, where John especially enjoyed one-on-one conversations in front of the fire. At the cabin, he enjoyed doing chores, professional reading from his chair in front of the

fireplace, and a cocktail and mixed nuts before dinner. Breakfast and dinner were family events to be accomplished in a single seating, with John manning the waffle iron or the charcoal-fired grill. He traveled the world with Judith to see their children and grandchildren. He made the effort to show up for others and for things that were important to people. He was a good husband, brother, father, grandfather, uncle, friend and person. He made a difference in the lives of others and in the world through his work, charity and kindness. John is predeceased by his parents, Ellen and Edward, sister Mary Theresa and brother James. He is survived by his wife, Judith Nielsen Adams, their four children: John D. (Andria Nicholson); Ellen Birch (Stephen Birch); Martin (Colleen); and David (Stephanie); nine above average grandchildren, one wonderful great-granddaughter; siblings Madonna, Millicent Dosh, and Edward (Sue); and many loved nieces, nephews, cousins, and godchildren. Mass of Christian Burial Tuesday, December 3, 2024, at Christ the King Catholic Church, 5029 Zenith Ave S, Minneapolis, MN 55410. Visitation at 10am; Mass at 11am; luncheon immediately after, at the church and burial at Lakewood Cemetery in Minneapolis. In lieu of flowers, please consider a memorial to the John Adams Scholarship, University of Minnesota. <https://cla.umn.edu/geography/alumni-friends/support>