

Roger Dashen, professor and former department chair of physics at UCSD died

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Roger Dashen, professor and former department chair of physics at the University of California, San Diego, died Wednesday, May 24, at Scripps Memorial Hospital in La Jolla following a heart attack. He was 57.

Dr. Dashen, a resident of La Jolla, was a leading researcher in elementary particle physics, and worked extensively in fields that included statistical mechanics, fluid dynamics and sound propagation in the ocean.

He was a consultant to the Los Alamos Scientific Laboratory, an advisor to the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation, and a member of JASON, an organization of scientists who consult for the government on national security issues.

"He was one of the most original thinking people I've ever encountered," said Marvin Goldberger, dean of UCSD's Division of Natural Sciences. "When you spoke to him, you always got an unusual slant on a problem and I personally always had the impression that he invented all the physics himself, that he never read a book. He was an extraordinarily intelligent, clear-thinking man."

Born May 5, 1938 in Grand Canyon, Colorado, Dr. Dashen graduated summa cum laude from Harvard University in 1960, where he received his bachelor of arts degree. Dr. Dashen later received a Ph.D. in physics from the California Institute of Technology, where he began his teaching career, ultimately rising to the rank of professor of theoretical physics.

In 1966, Dr. Dashen joined The Institute for Advanced Study in Princeton, N.J., as a five-year Member and was made a professor and permanent Member at the Institute in 1969. He also served as a visiting scientist at Rockefeller University, and a visiting professor at Ecole Normale Supérieure.

In 1986, he joined the UCSD faculty as a physics professor and became department chair in 1988.

At UCSD, he served on several review committees on campus, at the Scripps Institution of Oceanography and in the UC system. He also was instrumental in helping to bring parallel computing to the San Diego Supercomputer Center, located on the UCSD campus.

"As chair of physics, Roger helped recruit a number of outstanding faculty members," Goldberger said. "He was, in addition, an important member of the university community serving on important committees and generally adding his wisdom to hard problems."

Nationally, Dr. Dashen served as the chair of the Navy's top level committee on the security of missile-carrying submarines and other aspects involving anti-submarine warfare.

He also belonged to several professional organizations including the American Academy of Arts and Sciences and the National Academy of Science.

Dr. Dashen was an associate editor for the Journal of Mathematical Physics, served as a consultant for Schlumberger-Doll Research, was a visiting senior physicist with Fermilab and the Brookhaven National Laboratory, and served on numerous academic, research and government committees and advisory boards.

He was honored as an Alfred P. Sloan Foundation Fellow from 1966-1973, a Green Scholar at UCSD's Scripps Institution of Oceanography, and in 1981 he was named the Amos de Shalit Lecturer at The Weizmann Institute of Science, Israel.

Dr. Dashen is survived by his wife, Mary Kelleghan Dashen; and two children, Melissa Dashen of Hermosa Beach, Calif, and Monica Dashen of Washington, D.C. Arrangements for services are pending.

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