Bruce Gronbeck & University of Jyväskylä, Finland

We at the Department of Communication, University of Jyväskylä, have had the pleasure and honor of knowing Bruce for more than 20 years. He came to our university for the first time in the early nineties to teach in political science and communication. His courses centered around rhetoric, visual communication and political communication. At Bruce’s instigation, NCA arranged its international Summer Conference in Jyväskylä in the summer of 2000.

In 2000, our University conferred Bruce the degree of Honorary Doctor in a festive ceremony, with top hat and sword and everything. The then President of Finland, Martti Ahtisaari, a Nobel Peace Prize winner, was among the fellow Honorary Doctors.

In all, Bruce paid about ten visits to our campus. The University of Jyväskylä is located in the town of Jyväskylä, Central Finland, in the Lake district. The nature is similar to Minnesota, where Bruce was from.

Bruce was always a welcome and dear guest. We organized all kinds of activities for him (and us): Finnish baseball, swimming, visits to colleagues living in the countryside, long hikes in the forest, dinners in restaurants and homes. It may have happened that he didn’t quite follow a strict diet in food and drink when in Finland; we never tempted him, but we understood that breaking limits may have been one of the perks of travelling!

Bruce also enjoyed sauna, perhaps even more than some Finns. He understood that sauna is a place for long and profound discussions, contemplation about academia, work, and life – about being human. It was easy to have a relaxed relationship with him. Bruce was a most charming person.

His last visit to Jyväskylä took place in August 2009. One evening in our house, Bruce wrote in the guest book of our family: “The beer hydrated me, the sauna took the stiffness out of airplane joints, the meal nourished me, and the company of friends made me very, very happy to be back here in Jyväskylä.”

Bruce will be sorely missed by his many Finnish friends.

Pertti Hurme (Retired Previous Head of the Department of Communication)  
Maarit Valo (Professor of Speech Communication)