

Bruce Duncan Carlson obituary



Bruce Duncan Carlson, 88, beloved husband of Christel Staedt Carlson, passed away peacefully on July 26, 2025. Born in Wilmington, DE, in April 1937, he was the eldest son of Carl A. Carlson and Charlotte T. Duncan. Known as Pop, Pa, or Opa, Bruce was the quintessential "all-American Jersey boy." A proud graduate of Penns Grove High School (RE-HI), class of 1955, he was a three-sport athlete and a standout student. His senior year was marked by a once-in-a-lifetime experience: being chosen as a New Jersey delegate to Boys Nation in

Washington, DC, where he met President Eisenhower. Bruce followed his father's path to Harvard, graduating in 1959. The friendships he made there remained vital throughout his life, and reunions were treasured opportunities to reconnect. After college, while working in Baltimore, Bruce met Christel Staedt, a recent arrival from West Germany. Their marriage began a rich, 50+ year journey of shared purpose, love, and adventure. Together with their three children, Bruce and Christel spent 18 years living and working overseas. A dedicated international development professional, Bruce served communities in Peru and Chile (Church World Service), Thailand (USAID), Ghana and Colombia (Ford Foundation), and Venezuela (World Bank).

He concluded his international career as the World Bank's Resident Representative in Venezuela before returning to the U.S. Between assignments, Bruce earned a Master of Science in Public Health from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill in 1968. He also worked for the International Planned Parenthood Federation and JHPIEGO at Johns Hopkins University, settling with his family in Princeton, NJ, and later Bethesda, MD. Bruce had an insatiable curiosity and a fearless love of travel—whether navigating remote roads in Thailand during the Vietnam War, Ghana (location of a bloodless 1972 coup), or the Colombian mountains, he approached each trip with the same enthusiasm as a weekend getaway in Vermont. He was a gifted storyteller, master of puns, and devoted sports fan who made friends wherever he went. His warmth and humor left a mark on friends and colleagues in every corner of the world, from Chapel Hill and Colombia to Princeton and Bethesda.

Bruce was a dedicated member of Chevy Chase Presbyterian Church, serving as Elder, Deacon, and usher. He is survived by his sister Ann Carlson; his children Christina Hudson, Roger Carlson, and Amy Sturla; six grandchildren—Katharine Carlson, Bruce Hudson, William Carlson, Lucas Sturla, Duncan Hudson, and Nico Sturla—and one great-

grandchild, Heath Hudson. Bruce's family is deeply grateful for the love and memories shared by all who knew him. The qualities most often mentioned: caring, thoughtful, funny, reliable, sweet, personable, and quick-witted. Memorial plans are pending. Donations in his memory can be made to Planned Parenthood of Metropolitan Washington, DC, Inc. To plant trees in memory, please visit the [Sympathy Store](#).

Published by The Washington Post on Aug. 17, 2025.