

In Memoriam: *Dan Sachs '60*



Dan Sachs, cropped from the group picture of the Oxford University rugby team

THERE is a special attribute about the memories held of Dan Sachs. It is not elicited by any single recollection. The reflections of many of those who loved and admired him must be taken together, and only then does this extra response emerge: that each man who knew Dan Sachs found in him the quality which that friend valued foremost and hoped to be thriving in himself. He had a rare scope and penetration that made it possible for him to leave intense impressions upon the most diverse company.

The strong who speak of Sachs cite first his courage; the ambitious specify his drive; the intellectual, his love of learning; the tender, his understanding; the philosophical, his vision; the moral, his diligence to live by his own stern values. He won the respect of each man on his own grounds; yet always he was constant with himself.

His own search was for the heroic, and it can be judged that he found that. At the memorial service for Dan, the Rev. Mr. Milton Yeack said: "Life is not to be measured by accomplishments alone, but also by commitments." Daniel M. Sachs '60 died of cancer on June 20 at his home in Bethlehem, Pa., a few weeks before his twenty-ninth birthday. He left his wife, the former Joan Lundstrom, a brave young woman whose courage mirrored that of her husband, and their daughter, Alexandra, who was one year old this September 15. His own father, an air force colonel, died in a plane crash when Dan was only eight. "It is best that Dan did not have a son himself," says a close friend, "for Alexandra will not have to face the task of growing up to be her father."

Her father's standards were exceeded only by his goals. Dan Sachs' life could have been one of greatness. He prepared himself for that, not in cocky anticipation, but in studied precaution, so that if the opportunity ever did confront him, he would be provided for it. Shortly after he left Princeton, as a Rhodes Scholar, he wrote: "If we fail to seize the vision now, in the years of intellectual strife when character becomes formed, then we can seldom hope to breathe life into the myth once we take up the tools of the world."

The possibility of making any concession to the ordinary forced him after excellence. "I fear mediocrity

more than I fear anything else," he said. He came to Princeton with low college board scores, the first ever to enter the University from Emmaus (Pa.) High School. He was graduated from Princeton a Rhodes Scholar and a Phi Beta Kappa, with High Honors in French. He also earned honors in History at Oxford, and was elected to an office that is equivalent to class president in his college, Worcester. He endured Harvard Law next, not as a prelude to the Bar, but as an essential part of the structure of the career he planned in politics.

He never did like the study of law. It was too dry for his curious mind, one that raced in excited pursuit after ideas and experience. Sachs was a voracious and eclectic reader—history, philosophy, poetry, novels—and he pondered everything he read. He studied constantly. Yet—and more so in his last years—he also began zealously to scrutinize the people about him, especially—intentionally—those of different style and alien temperament. It began as a determined exercise, his own kindergarten for politics; it ended up bringing him an even more genuine appetite for life.

He probably never was satisfied that he was able, as he put it, "to become natural and easy." He was envious of those with that facility, and showed his admiration for them—which is perhaps why those of wit and warmth now are determined to maintain that Sachs had much more humor than he was ever credited with. Dan himself was convinced that "my phlegmatic, essentially German soul" was capable of laughing only at his own inability to laugh. "How can people live just for the moment?" he asked with jealous perplexity after spending one weekend of a French visit with a tough, scurrilous Algerian truck driver and his whole ribald family. That question Dan posed in 1960. By 1964 he had answered it sufficiently to become the only elected member of an impromptu, outlandish social order among Harvard proctors and graduate students that was titled "The Select Committee of the Whole Group" and was solemnly devoted to accomplishing absolutely nothing except an occasional night of intramural bedlam, as practiced in the guise of fellowship. And he loved it; he was learning to relax.

From the time he met Joan, his ways were easier and happier. He was introduced to her one day in the spring

of '64. "Well," he told friends later that evening, "I just met the girl I am going to marry." (He let her in on this observation somewhat later.) He courted her with walks, not because he was cheap or impecunious (though he never had much money), but because he was peculiar that way—Dan Sachs liked walks. Long, ambling, sauntering, meandering, striding, happy, serious—well, old-fashioned—walks. They were his parties. He reserved them for his best girl or for his good friends, as others save a bottle of wine or a newspaper clipping. With Joan, he walked along the Charles River that spring, and it was to be the happiest time in their lives.

NORMALLY, despite the panorama of his successes, Sachs approached each new experience with trepidation. He was as wary and withdrawn when he came to Oxford as he had been when he first arrived in Princeton. Ease—much less confidence—would come only when he felt that he was in command of a situation. He was determined to play football at Princeton despite his slight, fragile build simply because he appreciated that the sport was the one thing he could be immediately proficient in, and that the football stadium was the one place where a young man could find a touch of recognition. After he

To perpetuate his memory a Daniel M. Sachs Scholarship Trust has been established; for the present it will provide for the education of his daughter but its eventual and permanent purpose is to endow distinguished fellowships for graduating seniors who intend careers in politics or public service to study and travel abroad. If feasible, a similar fellowship will allow an Oxford man to study at Princeton. Inquiries should be directed to Professor Charles C. Gillispie of the History Department, one of the constituted advisors to the Trustee.—Ed.

received one of the more serious of the myriad injuries that he took from football, his faculty advisor asked him point-blank one day why he played the game when it cost so much suffering. Sachs answered directly. "But, sir, I must," was all he said.

He did truly love the game and sport. He won three letters in both football and lacrosse, and he remained at Oxford for a third year in order that he might become one of the few Americans ever to win a Blue, playing rugby against Cambridge. At Princeton, his many honors included the captaincy of his freshman football team, All-Ivy selection as a sophomore, winner of the William Winston Roper Trophy for all-around excellence in athletics, and co-winner of the John Prentiss Poe Cup for football. Coach Dick Colman feels that Sachs and Royce Flippin have been the two best running backs to play for Princeton since the war. Sachs' ability to accelerate was rated as without parallel.

His only deficiencies were, first, his size, and, second, his failure to accept that first deficiency. He permitted himself no special consideration; he ran, his coaches say, "too hard for his body." Why he played—"I must"—was why, too, he played as he did. Sachs wrote, after seeing his first bullfight: "Something of the medieval remains in my soul, I guess. Man against beast, the im-

minent threat of death, man armed with his skill and courage—this appeals to my sense of heroism."

It is not inappropriate then, despite the promise of his life and his incipient accomplishment in so many areas, that his only demonstrable public success was logged within the chalked lines of the playing field—a wispy number 46, the shock of black hair swept under his helmet, now dashing and hurtling around end. Yet even that image—preserved now in old game films that have been stopped and started a hundred times, to see how the left tackle blocked and where the linebacker moved—was denied the full exposure it deserved.

What caress of fame Sachs did have was restricted almost entirely to his sophomore season, a decade ago, the fall of 1957. That was the All-Ivy year, the only one even relatively free from injury. It is a conspicuous, but not exaggerated, analogy that Dan's football career, like his life, was more of promise than fulfillment. But the corollary to that is just as legitimate: in each episode of his life he began tentatively, searching, and ended successfully, mastering. The pattern for great accomplishment in a full life was clearly established.

THE cancer was originally detected following his first year at Harvard Law, on July 10, 1964. It was located behind the left knee, an area which had previously been operated on because of a hamstring injury. Initially a local operation was performed. Later, in the spring, summer and fall of 1966, a further local operation followed by two amputations eventually took all of his leg, but failed to arrest the malignancy. Dan married Joan, finished law school, and had the joy of their daughter in the shadow of time left him. He exercised his profession briefly in a law firm in Allentown in the intervals of hospitalization during the winter and spring of 1966-67. Near the end, while only the faint hope for miracle held amidst the pain, he displayed a strength of will, a selfless, continued interest in those about him, and also, a remarkable facility for detachment. He could calmly discuss the consequences of his impending death for his family; he was so concerned about what he considered a rude inability to remain alert for visitors, that he took to lifting weights on the day before he died in an effort to recapture some strength. There was massive dignity evident until he died peacefully on June 20 in the morning.

Dan approached his death with neither bitterness nor self-pity. "I am not afraid," he said. The emotion he did display was that of angry frustration, a torment that, simply, he should be denied his chance. "He was, after all," a friend says, "pragmatic more than philosophical, and romantic without being sentimental." He was an exceptional young man, cast out of qualities that rest easily in few men of any age, at any time.

In one of his moments of introspection, shortly after he left Princeton, he wrote: "This is a difficult time for me. The successes of my Princeton career are behind me and for the next ten years or so I pass into the shadows of the unknown. I feel the beginning of obscurity, and it has shaken my confidence. I've played before the crowds too long." The sorrow is as much for the crowds as for Dan Sachs that he was deprived of the chance to come before them again, that his life gave him time for only great commitment and a few bold Saturday afternoons in the autumns of a decade ago.—*Frank Deford '61*