

Professor Emeritus Sven W. Arndt, former director of the Lowe Institute, dies at 81



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Sven W. Arndt, a Claremont McKenna economist who spent his lengthy career guiding students and professional colleagues through the complexities of global trade and finance, has died. He was 81.

Arndt, who kept an office on campus and intended to pursue his research even after retiring last year, collapsed Tuesday and later died at Pomona Valley Hospital. The cause of his death was heart failure, his wife Linda Arndt said. “He had such incredible energy and stick-to-it-ive-ness,” she said. “If he were healthy, he’d still be going to conferences and interacting with students.”

Arndt, the Charles M. Stone Professor for Money, Credit, and Trade, and former director of the college’s Lowe Institute of Political Economy, joined the faculty in 1991. Previously, he taught for 16 years at UC Santa Cruz as well as holding temporary appointments at universities in Germany, Austria, Hong Kong, and elsewhere.

“Sven was a giant in his field, in the preparation of our students, and in the vibrant life of our community,” President Hiram Chodosh observed. “We will dearly miss and remember him.” While working at the U.S. Treasury Department in Washington D.C., he met Tom Willett, who became a close friend as well as a prominent economics professor at Claremont McKenna. Willett said his friend, known both for the rigor of his economic thinking and the dry humor he could unleash in an instant, was always in demand.

“He was incredibly well-known,” Willett said. “Very few people got invited to as many conferences around the world as he did.”

At Claremont, Arndt succeeded Willett as the Lowe Institute’s director in 1992. He was known for helping undergraduates develop research projects on the kind of real-world problems in international economics that they might face in their careers. It was an ambitious undertaking, Willett said, noting that the undergraduates had to be productive while lacking the advanced tools of a Ph.D.

For Joe Matt ’99, Arndt’s guidance was invaluable. Matt, now a vice president at Capital Research Global Investors in Los Angeles, said his former teacher inspired him to pursue international economics as a consultant in Malaysia. Later, he joined a startup that he said created thousands of call-center jobs in the Philippines. Now a board member of the Lowe Institute, Matt said he cherished Arndt’s humor. “He had a stern face, he was serious about his work, and he expected others to be serious about theirs,” Matt said. “But he’d start joking and he’d be laughing at the top of his lungs, and he was incredibly funny. It was like a sneak attack – you never expected it!”

In addition to being an ardent traveler, Arndt savored wine and opera. He and his wife made a yearly pilgrimage to the Metropolitan Opera in New York as well as taking in the L.A. Opera’s performances closer to home. He also loved to entertain, preparing gravlax, the Scandinavian marinated fish dish, for friends every Christmas.

Born Oct. 18, 1936, Arndt grew up in Kitchener, Ontario, Canada, and received his undergraduate degree from the University of Western Ontario. He received his doctorate from UC Berkeley in 1964 before teaching for five years at UCLA.

In addition to his wife, his survivors include their daughter Nicole Ouellette, of Claremont, and three grandchildren.

– *Steve Chawkins*