Ulric Neisser, the Susan Linn Sage Professor emeritus of Psychology, died at age 83 of complications from Parkinson’s disease. A member of the National Academy of Sciences and the American Academy of Arts and Sciences, he received honorary degrees worldwide – from the Università di Roma (La Sapienza), the Universitatea Babeș-Bolyai, Cluj-Napoca (Romania), Aarhus University (Denmark), the New School for Social Research, and Swarthmore College.

Neisser changed the course of psychology. He moved a generation of psychologists in the direction of a field named by his first book, *Cognitive Psychology* (1967). He then goaded that field as it settled into comfortable paradigmatic research with *Cognition and Reality* (1976), and later targeted the received wisdom about attention, memory, and intelligence in a distinguished array of edited volumes and provocative articles.

He was born Ulrich Gustav Neisser in Kiel, Germany, but his family realized that “Ulrich” was a bit overwhelming for a small child and he became “Der kleiner Dickie.” With the rise of Hitler, his father, an economist at a German research center, secured a position at the Wharton School of the University of Pennsylvania. The Neisser family came to America in 1933 and settled in Swarthmore. Ulrich became Ulric, but was known as Dick.

Dick became a freshman at Harvard in 1946 and spent the next two decades as a peripatetic, both intellectually and geographically. He dabbled in parapsychology, but once within psychology he quickly sided with the Gestaltists against the Behaviorists. He learned about psychology and language from his advisor, George Miller, but was never enamored of information theory. After finishing at Harvard, he went to Swarthmore to be near Wolfgang Köhler but worked instead under his assistant Hans Wallach and received his Masters degree in 1952. Dick realized that the future was not in Gestaltism, so he moved to MIT with Miller, but quickly moved back to Swarthmore for a one-year appointment as an instructor before returning to graduate school – but this time back at Harvard. After his Ph.D. in 1956 on a “neural quantum” theory of auditory
thresholds, and another year as an instructor at Harvard, he took a faculty position in psychology at Brandeis University and felt deep sympathy for the idealistic humanism of its chair, Abraham Maslow. Nonetheless, it was Oliver Selfridge at MIT’s Lincoln Laboratories who most piqued his curiosity. Together they produced the pandemonium model of pattern recognition. In that model all neural feature detectors, called “demons,” shout at a volume commensurate to the degree a stimulus pattern fits with what each demon had responded to in the past. A decision demon then listens to the cacophony and has final sway. The model and its description appeared in *Scientific American* in 1962 and forms a lasting centerpiece of recognition models. Dick then moved to the University of Pennsylvania where he wrote *Cognitive Psychology*.

Dick came to Cornell as a full professor just as that book appeared. It is not possible to overestimate its impact. As Dick himself noted wryly in his autobiography that “Many psychologists found themselves in a position like that of Molière's Monsieur Jourdain, who suddenly discovered that he had been speaking prose all his life!” Suddenly, it was as if cognitive psychology had always been there, but it was also a new term, uttered to impress at nearly every occasion.

Always a fan of the underdog and wary of the success his first book wrought, Dick then wrote his polemic *Cognition and Reality*, turning against the field he created. At Cornell, he had formed close ties with James and Eleanor Gibson, founders of the “ecological” approach to visual perception. Sketching out what the mind must face in the real world, Dick criticized the lack of “ecological validity” of research in the newly emerged mainstream of cognitive psychology. The main thesis of this book was the “perceptual cycle,” a then novel but now entrenched idea that places an active, information-seeking individual at the core of perception and cognition. Nonetheless, the field saw the book as an apostasy.

Somewhat perplexed by the reaction to this second book, Dick next focused his talents and energies on what then appeared to be idiosyncratic directions. Subjects in his experiments learned to simultaneously read and take dictation, and failed to notice a woman with an umbrella walking through a basketball game while counting passes among the players. He also investigated the slightly skewed contents of John Dean’s testimonies as pitted against the transcripts of the White House tapes, and the inaccuracies despite convictions of truthfulness in people’s “flashbulb” memories of the Challenger disaster and later a California earthquake. Current descendants of these ideas -- “change blindness,” the constructive nature of autobiographical memory, and the concept of the self -- are now mainstream research areas. In the middle of all of this he left Cornell in 1983 for Emory University where he became the Robert Wood Johnson Professor of Psychology.

His most recent scholarly interest was intelligence. In the 1980s he had edited a volume on school achievement in minority children and was always uncomfortable with the findings of IQ differences across ethnic groups. In the 1990s he spearheaded an American Psychological Association Task Force on intelligence and its report became the most highly cited work in its field. His last book was an edited a volume on intelligence, *The Rising Curve: Long-term Gains in IQ and Related Measures* (1998), which helped popularize the work of James Flynn on the century-long, worldwide gains in measured intelligence.

Neisser retired from Emory in 1998 and returned to Ithaca and to Cornell to teach for five more years. Throughout his life, he made a marriage out of a firm belief in discovered truth and a
lurking skepticism by means of a serial, passionate monogamy of ideas. He taught his many students an independence of mind and they have made their marks in widely flung research domains. And he loved his dogs, at least one of which could find its way from home, to Uris Hall, up an elevator or stairwell, and to his office. His partner Sandra Condry and his children -- Mark, Philip, Tobias, Juliet, and Joseph Neisser, and Jenneth Seidler -- survive him.

James Cutting, Chairperson; Barbara Finlay, Carol Krumhansl
Professor Ben Zion Netanyahu died in Jerusalem on April 30, 2012. He had been born in Warsaw in 1910. In 1920 his family immigrated to Palestine where he grew up and went to school, taking a Master’s degree at the Hebrew University of Jerusalem. He obtained his Ph.D. at Dropsie College in Philadelphia, PA., now the Center for Advanced Judaic Studies (CAJS) at the University of Pennsylvania. The dissertation soon became the book *Don Isaac Abravanel, Statesman and Philosopher* (1954), which has gone so far through five editions in English and a translation into Spanish. After teaching at Dropsie and at the University of Denver, professor Netanyahu came to Cornell in the fall of 1971, and became emeritus at the end of the academic year 1977-78. At Cornell he was chair of the Department of Semitic Languages and Literatures—now Department of Near Eastern Studies—where he taught a very popular course on Jewish identity.

On July 4, 1976, we his friends and indeed all America awoke to the devastating news that his oldest son Jonathan had died a hero in the rescue of 104 Jews kidnapped by terrorists at Entebbe airport in Uganda. Professor Netanyahu and his wife Cela had received notice of the loss from their second son Benjamin—now the Prime Minister of Israel—who took a trip from Boston to Ithaca. But for this story we better take the very words of the son: “After that difficult journey I reached the path leading to the house, and I saw my father walking in the living room. He looked out the window, our gazes met, and a look of surprise was in his face. When I entered the house, he asked: ‘Bibi, what are you doing here?’ A second later he understood, and cried out in pain. His cry was followed by that of my mother—I will not forget those cries” (From Alan D. Abbey in *The Eulogizer* on internet).

Cela was a lady who commanded both love and respect at first sight. She was simple, dignified; she even had a sweet and pleasant voice. Cela was professor Netanyahu’s best half; she helped him in everything that was not research, and even there she contributed with her skills as a typist. The only thing, on which Benzion would not delegate, even to Cela, was the direct handling of the appropriate documents for his work. As a scholar he was uncompromising, demanding perfection from himself and from his co-workers.
Professor Netanyahu was a figure of universal significance both as a politician and as a scholar. In both fields he mustered dedication and perfectionism. His political activity brought him to the United States in 1940 with the purpose of inciting American politicians to support the creation of the State of Israel. According to Dr. Rafael Madoff, Netanyahu’s success became clear when the Republican Party introduced in his convention of 1944 a pro-Zionist platform. The Democrats then adopted a similar position.

Professor Netanyahu’s political activity is of the public domain. For us it is more important to remember the colleague and scholar. I came to the Department of Romance Studies at Cornell in the fall of 1971, the same year as professor Netanyahu. When he found out that a new Hispanist had arrived who taught Medieval Spanish literature he sought me through our outstanding medievalist, Professor Alice Colby-Hall. In our first meeting he told me that he was about to finish a book on *The Origins of the Spanish Inquisition*, for which he only needed minor revisions and a few more notes.

In 1972 the second edition of the work *The Marranos of Spain from the Late Fourteenth to the Early Sixteenth Century, According to Contemporary Hebrew Sources* appeared. When I read that book I was amazed by the existence of so many sources on a key issue of Spanish history, which were inaccessible to most of us because they were written in Hebrew and had never been translated into Spanish. My immediate reaction was to undertake the translation of the book without mentioning the project to anybody and, of course, without any contract with a publisher. When I finished with the translation, I showed it to Netanyahu, and with the recommendation of Professor Angel Alcala (CUNY), the prominent historian of Spanish *conversos* and a friend of Netanyahu, we found the right publisher. The book appeared in Spanish and has already gone through two editions. After that experiment, all the other works of professor Netanyahu have also been published in Spanish. For each one, he came to me and said: I do not trust anybody but you. Eventually I myself did not want a third person to enter the relationship in which Netanyahu was the author and I his translator. So for years I devoted the time I could spare from my own work to translating his works, with one exception: *The Origins of the Inquisition in Fifteenth Century Spain* (1995). The book extends over 1400 pages, and they were too many for me alone. For this project I was fortunate to share the work with the above-mentioned professor Alcala. The translations of Netanyahu’s works have gone through several editions and continue to be the subject of lively attention and debate in Spain.

It would be wrong to classify Netanyahu merely as a historian of Spanish Jews and converts to Christianity. His studies have revolutionized the entire intellectual and political history of the Spanish fifteenth century. He has offered new profiles of kings, noblemen and churchmen of that century. Most importantly he has not limited his attention to political and economic documents; instead, he has studied many philosophical and theological texts in which criteria of discrimination were aired not only with regard to converts from Judaism but to women vs. men and peasants vs. noblemen, as well. The combination of political and intellectual history makes his work unique in Spanish historiography.

I have mentioned perfectionism as an exemplary feature of Netanyahu’s behavior. His models of scholarship were the great Jewish historians Heinrich Graetz and professors Klausner and Salo Baron”. Every time he mentioned these names he would start with the title “Professor”.
At one point he suspected that a pontifical instruction adduced by enemies of the converts in Salamanca had been adulterated because it contradicted the general behavior of the popes toward the converts from Judaism. Professor Netanyahu left the comfort of his home and undertook a trip to Rome in order to check the original document in the Vatican archive, and to be sure, he found that the words attributed to the pope did not exist in the original document.

With this thirst for perfection the minor revisions and few notes that were still missing in 1971 for the book on the Inquisition became a persistent work of 24 more years in which he did not spare whatever effort he considered necessary to make the book worthy of Graetz, Klausner and Baron. And indeed he succeeded: the scholarly monument was finally published at Random House in 1995, it has gone through several printings in America, and is a successful book in Spanish.

_Ciriaco Morón Arroy, Chairperson; Emerson Hinchliff_
Arthur H. Nilson joined the Faculty of the School of Civil Engineering at Cornell in 1956, after six years of professional practice in Oregon, California, and Connecticut. He was a member of that faculty, in charge of undergraduate and graduate courses in the design of reinforced and prestressed concrete structures, until his retirement in 1991. He served as Chairman of the Department of Structural Engineering from 1978 to 1985.

Art came to Cornell as an enlistee in the naval officer-training program in the late stages of World War II. After completing two years of undergraduate work in an accelerated engineering program, he was discharged to continue in the NROTC program here, and later at Stanford University. After receiving his bachelor's degree from Stanford and commission in the Navy, he continued as a reserve officer, and served briefly on active duty. His early work in Oregon and California was of a general civil engineering nature, during which he was to sample several of the many aspects of that
profession. Focusing then on structural engineering, he returned east and took employment with an architectural engineering firm in New Haven, Connecticut. After three years, in his own words, he decided to go back to school “to learn more about what he was supposed to know everything about,” and came to Cornell to study with George Winter, the distinguished head of the structural engineering group. He supported himself and his family teaching undergraduate practice-oriented courses, and discovered to his great surprise that he enjoyed teaching as well as the research associated with his master’s degree program.

Art was offered an assistant professorship after completing his Cornell master’s degree in 1956, a direct hire without a Ph.D., unusual even at that time. He became a key member of a department that George Winter (1907-1982) built into one of the nation’s most distinguished structural engineering groups. Among other notable members were Richard Gallagher, Peter Gergely, William McGuire, Floyd Slate and Richard White (all of whom predeceased Art). In a memorial tribute to Bill McGuire, Art wrote in 2013:

I recall that early on, Bill and I were called in and sat down with George Winter. This was probably an intimidating event for both of us, because George was, to say the least, a dominant figure. After a brief discussion we agreed that Bill would do steel and I would do concrete, and our professional directions were set from that point on.

This group produced several influential textbooks, among which was Design of Concrete Structures, that was inherited from an earlier generation of Cornell civil engineering faculty – the first four editions (1923 to 1940) were authored by CE alumni and professors Leonard C. Urquhart ‘09 (1886-1960) and Charles E. O’Rourke ‘17 (1896-1947). Winter collaborated with Urquhart and O’Rourke on the 5th and 6th editions. Art co-authored the next three editions of the textbook with Professor Winter, and after George’s passing carried on the work singly through two more editions, greatly
increasing the coverage and rigor of the book. He then joined with two of his former Cornell students, David Darwin and Charles Dolan, as co-authors for subsequent editions (the 15th edition is scheduled for release in 2015). Nilson also authored the textbook Design of Prestressed Concrete. Both books became standard works, widely adopted in the U.S. and abroad and translated into several foreign languages, and still in print.

Art’s clear and precise teaching style attracted and influenced students from his earliest days on the Cornell faculty. He was famous for his meticulous chalkboard work. Several graduates have reported that their entry into a career of structural engineering was significantly motivated by their exposure to his teaching and advising, and the course notes of his lectures served as a resource for a number of young faculty members as they began their own teaching careers.

After six years, with sabbatical support from Cornell and with generous fellowships from the Ford Foundation and the Danforth Foundation, Art was accepted at the University of California at Berkeley as a Ph.D. candidate. In one of his later years at Berkeley, he audited an advanced course in reinforced concrete structures, and it turned out that the book he had already co-authored was one of the required textbooks for the course. Art’s doctoral thesis included one of the very first applications of the then-emerging finite element method to reinforced concrete members and structures. He completed his degree in 1967 when he was 40 years of age.

Art was the first in his family to attend college, and was always proud of “making it all the way on his own” as he did. His father, who was obliged for financial reasons to drop out of high school before completing 9th grade, and who worked his way up to a responsible position in the construction industry, never failed to address his letters to his son by “Dr. Nilson.”

Art served on many professional committees of the American Concrete Institute (ACI) including the committees on building code,
concrete slab construction, and structural deflections. He was a founding member and first chairman of the American Society of Civil Engineers (ASCE) Committee on Finite Element Analysis of Reinforced Concrete Structures. His pioneering research on highperformance concrete has been widely recognized. He was awarded the ACI Wason Medal for materials research in 1974, the ACI Wason Medal for best technical paper in 1986 and 1987, and the ACI Structural Research Award in 1993. He was elected to the grade of Fellow in ACI as well as ASCE, and was made Honorary Member of ACI, the Institute’s highest award, in 2005.

Art held research appointments or lectureships at the University of Manchester and Salford University in England, and Technical University of Milan in Italy. He held registration as a professional engineer in several states.

Art for many years had a strong interest in residential architecture. He designed and had built four residences in NY State, Maine, and Massachusetts, the first of which was selected for publication in a national home magazine. His architectural tastes ran toward what he described as “conservative contemporary” and all featured studio ceilings, extensive use of glass, exposed beams and wide balconies.

After his retirement from Cornell in 1991 Art and his wife Linda moved to Maine, where they built a home on the coast. After 8 years and a few notably severe winters, they decided to relocate to Massachusetts and moved to Cape Cod, where they were able to settle in a uniquely attractive community, again near the water. Art reconstructed and expanded a house built ten years earlier. Drawing on skills acquired over the years with his previous houses, he did all the interior finish carpentry, including cabinetwork, as well as clearing and landscaping.

For his entire lifetime, Art was an enthusiastic sailor. He spent his early years on Long Island, New York while owning a number of small sailboats. In Ithaca, he was a member of the Yacht Club and was successful in racing, but his real love was coastal cruising. He
and his wife Linda met on the beach in Massachusetts, and before long were sailing the New England coast together. They visited most of the best ports of call from Long Island Sound to Schoodic, Maine, sometimes living on board for a month or more at a time. He continued his interest in boating in his later years.

Art was deeply committed to music. In his teen years he played the saxophone and clarinet, and played professionally in a “swing” band in the 1940s. His interest in music continued in later life, but his listening trended more toward Beethoven than Benny Goodman, although he had a large collection of music of the 30s and 40s. With Linda’s encouragement, for a brief period, he resumed play with his clarinet, and enjoyed playing Bach duets with a faculty friend. When very young he became interested in photography, working first with a simple box camera, then through a succession of 35 mm film cameras and digital cameras to photograph subjects of interest as he travelled in the US and abroad.

Art is survived by his wife, Linda, four children by his previous wife, Lee, including a son Russell and three daughters: Sheryl Sedgwick, Carol Hansen, and Kim Kabbes, as well as four grandchildren: Chris and Caroline Sedgwick, Storm Nilson, and Eve D’Vincent.

This memorial is largely based on a draft that Art, in his characteristically methodical fashion, produced himself in the months before his death.

John F. Abel, Chair; David Darwin;
Kenneth C. Hover; Arnim H. Meyburg