

John Nash, wife, 'A Beautiful Mind' inspiration, die in NJ

May 24 2015, by Bruce Shipkowski



In this Oct. 11, 1994 file photo, Princeton University professor John Nash speaks during a news conference at the school in Princeton, N.J., after being named the winner of the Nobel Peace Prize for economics. Nash, whose struggle with schizophrenia was chronicled in the 2001 movie "A Beautiful Mind," died in a car crash along with his wife in New Jersey on Saturday, May 23, 2015, police said. (AP Photo/Charles Rex Arbogast, File)

John Forbes Nash Jr., a mathematical genius whose struggle with schizophrenia was chronicled in the 2001 movie "A Beautiful Mind," has died along with his wife in a car crash on the New Jersey Turnpike. He was 86.

Nash and Alicia Nash, 82, of Princeton Township, were killed in a [taxi](#) crash Saturday, state police said. A colleague who had received an award with Nash in Norway earlier in the week said they had just flown home and the couple had taken a cab home from the [airport](#).

Russell Crowe, who portrayed Nash in "A Beautiful Mind," tweeted that he was "stunned."

"An amazing partnership," he wrote. "Beautiful minds, beautiful hearts."

In a statement Sunday, his co-star in the film, Jennifer Connelly, called the couple "an inspiration," and the film's director, Ron Howard, tweeted that "it was an honor telling part of their story."

Known as brilliant and eccentric, Nash was associated with Princeton University for many years, most recently serving as a senior research mathematician. He won the Nobel Prize in economics in 1994 for his work in game theory, which offered insight into the dynamics of human rivalry. It is considered one of the most influential ideas of the 20th century.

Just a few days ago, Nash had received a prize from the Norwegian Academy of Sciences and Letters in Oslo with New York University mathematician Louis Nirenberg, who said he'd chatted with the couple for an hour at the airport in Newark before they'd gotten a cab. Nirenberg said Nash was a truly great mathematician and "a kind of genius."

Princeton University President Christopher Eisgruber said the Nashes were special members of the university community.



In this March 24, 2002 file photo, John Nash, left, and his wife Alicia, arrive at the 74th annual Academy Awards, in Los Angeles. Nash, the Nobel Prize-winning mathematician whose struggle with schizophrenia was chronicled in the 2001 movie "A Beautiful Mind," died in a car crash along with his wife in New Jersey on Saturday, May 23, 2015, police said. (AP Photo/Laura Rauch, File)

"John's remarkable achievements inspired generations of mathematicians, economists and scientists who were influenced by his brilliant, groundbreaking work in game theory, and the story of his life with Alicia moved millions of readers and moviegoers who marveled at their courage in the face of daunting challenges," Eisgruber said in a statement.

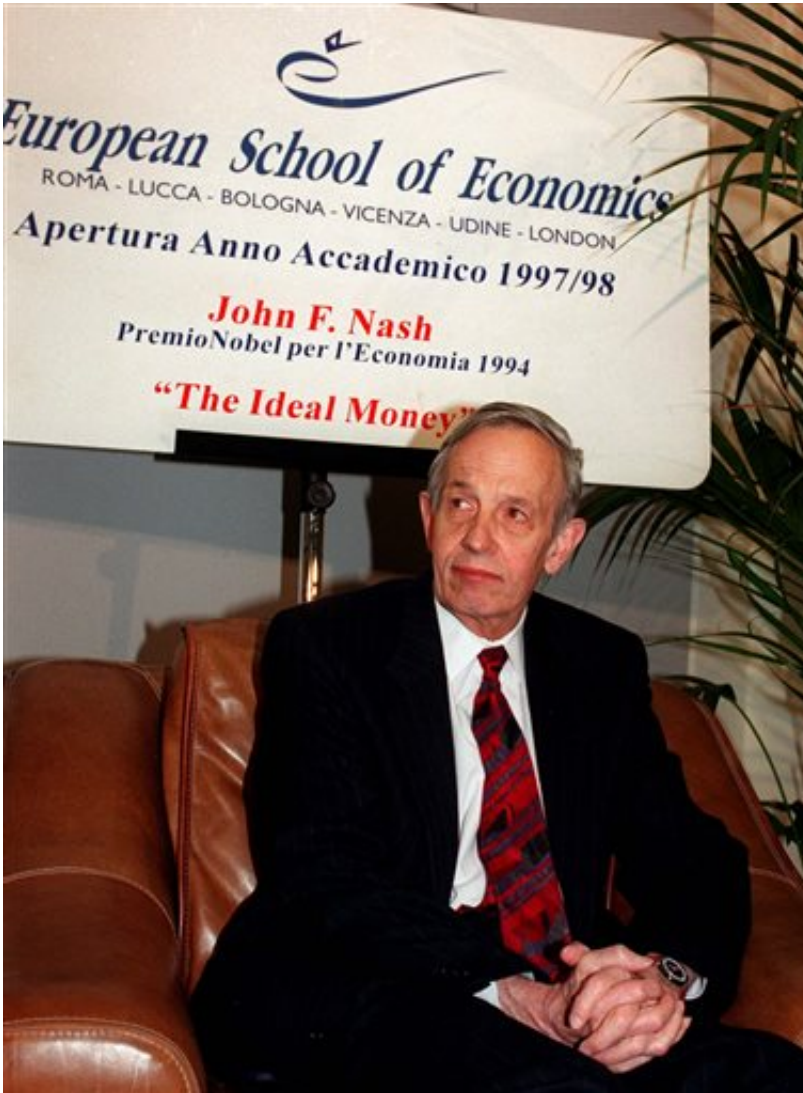
New Jersey State Police say the Nashes were both ejected from the cab in the crash around 4:30 p.m. Saturday in Monroe Township, about 15 miles northeast of Trenton. The cab driver was hospitalized.

News of the deaths was shocking to Nirenberg.

"We were all so happy together," Nirenberg said. "It seemed like a dream."

John David Stier, Nash's son with his first wife, said he learned of the death Sunday morning. "It's very upsetting," he said.

In an autobiography written for The Nobel Foundation website, Nash said delusions caused him to resign as a faculty member at MIT. He also spent several months in New Jersey hospitals on an involuntary basis.



In this Oct. 28, 1997 file photo, John Forbes Nash, 1994 Economics Nobel Prize winner, takes a break during the European School of Economics conference in Rome. Nash, the Nobel Prize-winning mathematician whose struggle with schizophrenia was chronicled in the 2001 movie "A Beautiful Mind," died in a car crash along with his wife in New Jersey on Saturday, May 23, 2015, police said. (AP Photo/Plinio Lepri, File)

However, Nash's schizophrenia diminished through the 1970s and 1980s as he "gradually began to intellectually reject some of the delusionally influenced lines of thinking," he wrote.

The 2001 film "A Beautiful Mind" won four Oscars, including best picture and best director, and generated interest in John Nash's life story. The movie was based on an unauthorized biography by Sylvia Nasar, who wrote that Nash's contemporaries found him "immensely strange" and "slightly cold, a bit superior, somewhat secretive."

Much of his demeanor likely stemmed from mental illness, which began emerging in 1959 when Alicia was pregnant with a son. The film, though, did not mention Nash older son or to the years that he and Alicia spent living together after divorcing. The couple split in 1963, then resumed living together several years later and finally remarried in 2001.

Born in Bluefield, W. Va., to an electrical engineer and a housewife, Nash had read the classic "Men of Mathematics" by E.T. Bell by the time he was in high school. He planned to follow in his father's footsteps and studied for three years at the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh (now Carnegie Mellon University), but instead developed a passion for mathematics.

He then went to Princeton, where he worked on his equilibrium theory and, in 1950, received his doctorate with a dissertation on non-cooperative games. The thesis contained the definition and properties of what would later be called the Nash equilibrium.

Nash then taught at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology for several years and held a research post at Brandeis University before eventually returning to Princeton.

John Nash: A life of great struggle and even greater success

Born to an electrical engineer, and later a precocious and dashing young

man who attained an Ivy League education, John Nash seemed destined for a life of stunning success. That he achieved, winning a Nobel Prize in 1994, but not without a struggle with mental illness that would make him a household name even more so than his achievements in mathematics.

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But it was while teaching at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology in 1959, when his wife, Alicia, was pregnant with their son, that schizophrenia began to emerge, a yearslong fight that was chronicled in the Academy Award-winning blockbuster "A Beautiful Mind." The Nashes died in a car accident late Saturday on the New Jersey Turnpike. He was 86; she was 82.

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Russell Crowe, who was nominated for best actor for playing Nash, tweeted that he was "stunned" by news of the couple's death.

"An amazing partnership," he wrote. "Beautiful minds, beautiful hearts."

Jennifer Connelly, who won the Oscar for best supporting actress for her portrayal of Alicia Nash, called the couple "an inspiration," and the film's director, Ron Howard, tweeted that "it was an honor telling part of their story."

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John Nash held a research post at Brandeis University before eventually returning to Princeton. Known as brilliant and eccentric, he was associated with Princeton for many years, most recently serving as a senior research mathematician.

He was awarded the Nobel Prize in economics for his work in [game theory](#), which offered insight into the dynamics of human rivalry. It is considered one of the most influential ideas of the 20th century.

Just days before his death, Nash received a prize from the Norwegian Academy of Sciences and Letters in Oslo with New York University mathematician Louis Nirenberg, who called Nash a truly great mathematician and "a kind of genius."

Nirenberg said he had chatted with the Nashes for an hour at the airport in Newark, New Jersey before they'd gotten into a taxi to return home to Princeton Township.

New Jersey State Police say the Nashes were thrown out of the taxi when it crashed around 4:30 p.m. Saturday in Monroe Township, about 12 miles from their home. The cab driver was hospitalized.

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