

Offline

Cybernet designer Marianne Waage makes her final sign-off to the world

The Cyberworld has shrouded itself in black this week, as word spreads of Marianne Waage's death. Waage, notorious American designer and revolutionary web developer, died on Sunday while staying at her summer residence in Norway.

Waage's designs in 2003 for the now obsolete Internet set the standard for the design industry. In a time when bloated, bandwidth hungry web pages were the norm, her simplistic and elegant designs were a breath of fresh air.

"She was a very private person," says business partner and friend Bill Kendrick, **"It was hard for her to be in the spotlight all the time."**

PHOTOGRAPH BY STEVEN WORMLEY



"Marianne and her brother were practically inseparable," according to a mutual friend, Christopher Smallwood.



"She would spend all day in the lab, trying to find the newest and the best," says Remington Stone (in the lab with Waage).



Waage was buried in the family plot, located in her mother's homeland in Norway.

When the Internet's capacity was to the bursting point, it was Waage who started the move to the then fledgling electronic media, Cybernet. With fiberoptic being adopted by the major phone companies, Cybernet quickly rose into demand, with Waage at its head. "The Web has reached its limit. We need something better to pick up the slack," she told a potential client. Although her work was most prominent in such companies as Macy's, Levi-Strauss, and Intel, she often volunteered for local non-profit organizations.

However, her fame was only partially due to her extraordinary gifts and the fact that she was active in creating international policy for the Cybernet. She was also infamous for her many tangled romantic encounters.

Not long after graduating from University of California in Davis with a degree in Graphic Design in 2001, she married noted computer programmer Jason Thomas.

After the murder of Bill Gates in 2005 during the press conference announcing Windows Millenium, Tho-

mas bought out Microsoft. Together with Waage, he attempted to reign in the notoriously bugged software giant.

In a tragic car accident two years later, Thomas and their six-month old baby were killed by a drunk driver. Soon after, Waage vanished from the public eye into seclusion. "I really don't feel like being around people right now. Jason left a lot of unfinished business, I need some time to take care of it," she told a friend before she left.

She continued to run the behemoth corporation from afar, with her brother, Erik, taking care of the day to day operations. "It was a rough period of transition for her. I was

glad to help out, I just wish there was more I could have done," Erik remarked.

After 3 years of this self-imposed isolation, Waage made a dramatic return to the limelight. In a rare interview with Times, she explained her intention to sell her controlling stock in Microsoft, and resume her interrupted research into new forms of information technology. "Now that my husband's dream of reforming Microsoft's shoddy software development is fulfilled, I want to get back to my own dreams."

Waage went through a series of brief but intense relationships around this time. Most notable of these were Nobel Physics Prize winner Eric Harris and multi-millionaire John Tillman. Weekly she could be seen strolling the streets of Seattle with a new beau on her arm. On several occasions, the local police were called in to keep disgruntled ex-lovers in line. "I'm beginning to think we should just set up shop permanently at this place, as often as we're here," one officer was overheard saying.

Although many wild rumors were spread, Remington Stone, a reknowned biophysicist and a close friend, explains, “She told me once that she was trying to find her own identity again. She was very confused then.”

It was around this time that she founded Aramay, a non-profit organization. It was intended to help develop the Cybernet and find new extensions for real world applications.

In 2012, Waage and her partners, Bill Kendrick and Elizabeth Olsen, announced their plans to introduce a revolutionary new technology which would allow more interactive use of the Cybernet. Earlier this year she claimed to have “run into some problems, but with luck we’ll be ready in a few months.” She declined to say any more on the subject.

With Waage's untimely death this week, at age 34, it's still uncertain what has become of this research. Full control of Aramay was turned over to Waage's partners. Kendrick and Olsen were unavailable for comment.

The Norwegian Prince Olav XV announced the death on Monday as he was returning from Scandinavian Summit in Sweden. “This is an irreplaceable loss for contemporary thought and culture - not just for America or Norway, but for the world,” Olav was quoted as saying by CNN. Olav did not give the cause of death or say where Waage had died.

Rumors have spread that she may have been the victim of foul play, but the authorities have been silent on the matter. Cybernet sleuths have been creeping out of the ether with wild allegations of corporate sabotage against IT.com, a rival for the development of Cybernet technology.

Erik Waage, in a brief statement to the press, explained, “In spite of the sudden and expansive media coverage my sister's death has caused, it is our every intention to continue the research that she started.”

“The world lost a visionary,” her friend Rachel Barnett told PEOPLE, “but her work, as well as her spirit, will continue to influence our lives for years to come.”

- **Melissa Hardenbrook**
- **Therese Unneberg** in Norway



Waage is captured in a rare moment at her home in Washington, celebrating her 28th birthday with her brother, Erik, and her husband, Jason Thomas.