

CROSSED THE BAR

Benjamin Pollock Douglass

Benjamin Pollock Douglass died peacefully in his sleep February 13th at home in Arizona, with family close by. He was fortunate to have enjoyed good health for over 92 years.

A grandson of the founder of Dun & Bradstreet, surrounded by a family of investment bankers, Ben early on showed signs of what proved to be his lifelong passionate enjoyment of the natural world. Birds especially delighted him. He graduated from the Hill School in Pennsylvania, and Yale University, where he majored in Botany. The summer before Hitler invaded Poland, he toured Europe with the Glee Club.

He married his wife of 59 years, Elizabeth, in September of 1940. They raised their five children, all born in 1940's, in Oak Park, Illinois, where he had been born and raised.

Ben enlisted in the Navy during the War, serving on Navy Pier in Chicago and training as a radar technician at Great Lakes Naval Air Base in Glenview, Illinois. He was with the Reptile and Bird divisions of the Brookfield Zoo for a couple of years before settling in to nearly thirty years with the Avenue State Bank in Oak Park, working his way from teller to Vice President before he retired.

By 1949, Ben and Betty had joined the Belvedere, in #129. It gave both of them enduring pleasure that their children, grandchildren, and great-grandchild have enjoyed the Club's family atmosphere and amenities over the last 60 years. Betty spent whole summers in Charlevoix with the five children, while Ben worked at the bank and joined them on weekends and vacations. In the days before smoke alarms, when a tragic second story fire at the Sequanota Club involved a fatality, they reluctantly relinquished the charms and views of #129, and spent the next fifty years injecting a great deal of ambience and character into the modest ranch cottage at #309. In the 1990's, when that cottage no longer easily accommodated their extended family, they built and moved to #219.

Ben was an adept sailor in his younger days, enjoyed golfing after retirement, and was an avid duplicate bridge player his whole life. He had a small, black-hulled, red-sailed sloop in the early '50's, and was known to tag along Club races in it. In his last decade he was able to observe diverse exotic wildlife on a trip to Kenya, and cruises to the Galapagos and Alaska.

He was a quiet, unassuming, generous good-natured soul, with a quirky sense of humor. It was not unusual for him to amuse or nonplus even casual acquaintances. Some pool shooting friends of his in a retirement community where he spent some time in Massachusetts called him Gentle Ben, for his uncannily accurate soft touch at the billiard table. That sums him up away from the table as well.

He will be missed and fondly remembered by many friends as well as family.