

# CROSSED THE BAR

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## William Carroll Connett V



William Carroll Connett V was born on February 22, 1939 in Mexico City to Josephine Fusz Connett and William Carroll Connett IV. He died 2 days after his 84<sup>th</sup> birthday in Traverse City, Michigan on February 24, 2023, after suffering complications from Acute Myeloid Leukemia.

William lived a life of adventure, intellectual nourishment, and kindness. He was imbued with an unshakeable sense of self that gave him confidence to take on challenges that would daunt most. In Elementary School Wm's belief in his prowess as a chef led him to take the family's entire WWII egg ration to make Ile Flottante as a surprise for his parents. Throughout his life he continued to rule the kitchen and delighted in cooking for family and friends. At John Burroughs High School he and schoolmate, John Hartford, spent two summers as riverboat deckhands going up and down the Mississippi. They worked the river by day and by night Hartford regaled the crew with his banjo and river songs. It was during these summers where William not only fell in love with the banjo, but established an everlasting connection to the Midwest landscape he called home. On a year-long break from his Mathematics PhD

program at the University of Chicago, William roughnecked for Zapata Oil off the New Orleans coast. During his off weeks as a roustabout, he road tripped to many a Louisiana parish Juke Joint, falling in love with New Orleans Jazz along the way. Throughout their early marriage, William and Judith spent countless vacations canoeing, hiking and cross-country skiing in the wilds of Ontario and across the Pacific Northwest. Their adventures were numerous including almost losing their lives going over a waterfall in their canoe, sawing their canoe nearly in half to settle a bet, and the time William chased a bear up a tree because it had stolen his biscuit dough. During a sabbatical spent at the University of Washington, William in his spare time became an apprentice to a master woodworker. Together they crafted a 33-foot classic wooden sailboat and thus William added shipbuilding to his bank of knowledge for how to fix almost anything from radiators to window jams. At the age of 50 William decided it was time to learn the violin. Unlike the 5-year-olds that raced past him at group lessons- his fingers were stiff and his ears untrained, but he practiced passionately every day and at the age of 75 he joined the St. Louis Confluence Chamber Orchestra - an unending source of joy and learning.

William spent his professional career as a theoretical mathematician. As a professor at the University of Missouri – St. Louis he made significant contributions to the field of Orthogonal Polynomials, was a beloved teacher and a coveted sparring partner at the faculty lunch tables on topics ranging from the mathematical to theological. In addition to his academic pursuits, he applied his knowledge of mathematics to the more practical realm helping design McDonald Douglas aircraft wings. However, his proudest professional achievement was finding ways to open academic and diplomatic doors for mathematicians across the world, helping to bring some of the greatest mathematical minds in previously overlooked developing countries into the mainstream of academic conversation. In mathematics, as in the rest of his life, William aimed to broaden the discourse, find the interesting thoughts where no one else was looking, and bring people together in graceful and unexpected ways.

William's unshakeable sense of self enabled him to take on challenges, but it also gave him an ease and patience with those around him. Always with a lens of curiosity, he chose to see the good in people and situations. He could tell amazing stories. But he was just as interested, and indeed gifted, at coaxing stories out of others. He possessed a knack for weaving the interests and experiences of everyone at the table into one riveting conversation. You could walk away from a 30-minute discussion about the wheels of office chairs having laughed, cried and screamed. You could find yourself in a passionate dialog about the Hundred Years' War even though you had never heard of it before sitting down at the table. William could find the unique conversation in every room and the connection where it seemed improbable. His love will be felt forever as we recall the stories we all have been a part of.

He is survived by a wealth of friends, his beloved wife of 53 years, Judith; His daughter and original tax camper, Lilly; His Son-in-Law and resident poet, Luke; His eldest grandson and chief story listener, August; His granddaughter and his most enthusiastic violin pupil, Eliza; and his baby grandson and chief cuddler, Max. He is also survived by his sister, Charring Scoular of Houston, Tx; his brother, Squire Connett of Panacea, FL and his nieces and nephews.

A memorial service will be held May 20<sup>th</sup> at 10:30AM at The Racquet Club East, St. Louis, MO

In lieu of flowers the family asks that gifts be made to  
Little Traverse Conservancy in Northern Michigan  
3264 Powell Rd  
Harbor Springs, MI 49740  
[www.landtrust.org](http://www.landtrust.org)

The St Louis Confluence Chamber Orchestra  
C/o Mary Wilcox  
430 Mission Court  
St. Louis, MO 63130  
[www.confluencechamberorchestra.org](http://www.confluencechamberorchestra.org)

Or those able, donate blood or platelets through the Red Cross  
William received approximately 88 units of blood and 31 units of platelets over the course of his fight with AML. These donations are the reason William lived to see his baby grandson's first steps. We are truly grateful for all who donate.