

CROSSED THE BAR

William Morgan Claggett

William Morgan Claggett, known to friends and family as Billy, bid adieu to this world on June 9, 2024, at the sprightly age of 93, leaving behind a tapestry of tales, triumphs and the occasional menu suggestion. Born on December 8, 1930, in Los Angeles, to William Nathaniel and Dorothy Morgan Claggett, Billy grew up in St. Louis, attended the University of Virginia, graduated from Ohio State University, and served in the United States Army as a 1st Lieutenant. He is survived by his adoring wife of 48 years Barbie Claggett, daughter Caroline Claggett, stepson Sandy Rogers (Laing), stepdaughter Didi Bowers (Ros), six grandchildren: Kaitra Robbins, Clark Rogers (Daniella), Page Boadway (Tyler), George Rogers, Molly Bowers, and Jack Bowers, and great granddaughter Charlotte Boadway. Billy was predeceased by his grandson Henry Rogers.

After cutting his teeth at Gardner, Wells Rich Green advertising agency, Billy rose to Vice President of Advertising and Marketing at Ralston Purina Company and coined the slogan “Meow, meow, meow, meow”. While at Ralston, Billy served as Chairman of Association of National Advertisers (ANA), and as Chairman of The Audit Bureau of Circulations. He was a charter member of the National Advertising Review Board (NARB), and a board member of The Advertising Council. After retiring from Ralston, Billy started a consulting firm, the LIAN, and then served as Enterprise Rent-A-Car’s marketing and advertising guru.

Billy was an early adopter of all new technologies including the cell phone, the microwave oven, Betamax, fax machines, and eventually email. His legendary email prowess allowed him to organize many groups and make endless copies and lists. His social calendar was full. He was a member of many clubs including The Everglades Club in Palm Beach, where he served as Treasurer and Executive Committee member. He was President of both the Racquet Club in St. Louis and the Belvedere Club in Charlevoix, MI, and a long-time governor of The Brook in New York. Billy started several eating clubs to enable friends to gather, share a meal and some fellowship. These groups include The Crocodiles and The Round Table in Palm Beach, The Library in St. Louis and Senior Gang in Charlevoix. He also wrote and self-published Claygate Guides to Fine Dining in London, Paris and New York.

Throughout his life, Billy devoted himself to exercise and healthy eating. Tennis, squash and “bad but fast” golf were all part of Billy’s routines. Eventually, he became a devotee of the Schwinn Airdyne bike, a staple in both of his residences. Billy served on the boards of the Mayflower Society, the Society of the Colonial Warriors, and United Way of Palm Beach. Billy was a member of Bethesda by the Sea Episcopal Church in Palm Beach and Christ Episcopal Church in Charlevoix, MI.

As we bid farewell to Billy let us raise a glass in a sitting down toast to a perfectly curated menu and elegantly alliterated place cards. Billy may be gone, but his spirit – along with his endless stream of emails – will continue to brighten our days for years to come. In lieu of flowers, memorial gifts may be made to the Belvedere Scholarship Fund PO Box 218 Charlevoix, MI 49720.