

CROSSED THE BAR

David Leroy Grumman Sr.

September 19, 1934 – January 3, 2025



David Leroy Grumman Sr., died peacefully on Jan. 3 at his home in Evanston. He was 90. David visited and spent many summers at the former Perkins cottage #141 beginning during the late 1950's and continuing through August 2024. David was introduced to the Belvedere while courting his future wife, Blair Perkins, the two having met at Cornell University. David grew up sailing on a 46-ft Alden Ketch in Long Island Sound, NY. That Blair's father, Lawrence "Larry" Perkins, owned a 43-ft Alden Schooner, Allegro, and also loved to sail sealed the deal. The two were married in Evanston, IL in 1958. Larry and Midge Perkins purchased cottage #141 in the late 1950's with the intention of providing a homebase for the anticipated arrival of grandchildren as well as providing a launch point for extended sailing expeditions on Allegro and later Allouez. Blair and David introduced their children, Roy, Cornelia and Eleanor, to the Belvedere beginning in 1961. Following the 2003 death of Blair Grumman, David became reacquainted with a fellow Evanston resident and artist, Mary Ann Pollard.

By 2005, they married. By 2020, as the burdens of caring for a 160-year-old historic Evanston home one block from Lake Michigan became too much, David and Mary Ann moved into an independent home in Westminster Place in Northwest Evanston.

Cottage #141 provided a needed summer base of operations for sailing, swimming, golf, tennis, and porch parking, along with boisterous family gatherings and, occasionally, his specialty homemade deep dish pizza - a daylong production. On several occasions, multiple "overflow" Belvedere Club cottages were rented to accommodate the well-attended Perkins family gatherings. David was a regular on the club sailboat racing circuit, skippering Hawks and Precisions with sometimes tepid crewing assistance from family members. Loud discussions of triumphant race victories or tragic defeats at the hands of the Witherspoon's, Paynes and Perkins-in-laws, Brad, Dwight and Julia, or the fickle weather could be heard from the porch at 141, continuing at least until Happy Hour. He continued to sail on the 36-foot ketch, Allouez, that was kept at the nearby Irish's Boat Works. He particularly enjoyed day sails and mini-cruises on Lake Charlevoix and extended multi-week cruises with family and friends to the North Channel and Georgian Bay of Lake Huron, Lake Michigan and Lake Superior. Always the enthusiastic competitor, David loved tennis, golfing and, what has been termed, "King Pong" on the bespoke, oversized ping-pong table at cottage #141. Decades of college sports and squash finally took their toll on his knees and limbs and David happily succumbed to becoming a full-time "porch person" at 141. David loved spending his summers at the Belvedere and in recent years attempted to spend as much time as was bearable in the still minimally heated and non-air-conditioned cottage #141.

David Grumman was born in New York City in 1934 but raised in Port Washington and Plandome, Long Island, NY. David was the youngest of four children of Rose and Leroy Grumman, founder of Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corp. David shared his father's love of sailing, building mechanical contraptions in their basement, and solving engineering problems. Ironically, when asked why he didn't follow in his father's footsteps and learn to fly airplanes, David said that his father thought flying was "too risky." Instead, he focused his leisure time on land and sea-based activities. David learned to sail as a child and his love for sailing continued throughout his life. He enjoyed family cruises on various Grumman motor and sailboats. As a teen, he skippered his 19-foot Lightning, Black Panther, in competitions throughout Long Island Sound.

He attended Deerfield Academy in Western Massachusetts beginning in 1948, where David's love of sports – specifically soccer, squash, and lacrosse – flourished. He met Blair Perkins of Evanston at a college party at Cornell University. He was a Naval ROTC, engineer and triathlete, finding time to play on the varsity soccer, squash and lacrosse teams during the Fall, Winter, and Spring seasons, respectively. He captained Cornell's lacrosse team and his role on offense was to hover around the opposing goal and score. One of his matchups found him competing against a powerful Syracuse team that included the legendary future NFL Hall-of-Famer, Jim Brown. This was the second time he faced off against Jim Brown, and David recalled “bouncing off” Brown while chasing a loose ball. David's love of squash lasted well into his 70s, by which time the toll of aches and pains amassed from decades of strenuous sports finally ordered his surrender.

David completed his degree in Mechanical Engineering at Cornell in 1956. Although David interned at Grumman Aircraft Engineering Corporation one summer, working on the F7F Tigercat, he decided not to pursue a career with his father's firm, choosing instead to carve his own career path. Subsequently David began work at Chicago-based architectural firm, Perkins & Will, designing and later managing a team working on mechanical systems for large buildings. After departing Perkins & Will in the early 1970's, David founded an engineering consulting firm that focused on efficiently designed mechanical systems for buildings, thereby reducing their energy consumption, lowering operating costs, and helping the environment. Beginning in a small, two-room office with Blair as his unpaid administrative assistant, the firm steadily expanded with an ever-growing staff, projects nationwide, and satellite offices in multiple states. Today, Grumman/Butkus Associates boasts over 150 employees in four offices across the country, and specializes in sustainable, energy efficiency consulting for large institutions, from hotels to universities, to hospitals.

Throughout this period, he held leadership roles with the American Society of Heating, Refrigeration, and Air Conditioning Engineers (ASHRAE), an international professional membership organization. David's work with the ASHRAE was instrumental in developing previously non-existent building energy efficiency standards beginning in 1975. The legacy of this work carries through building design and renovation codes used throughout the world.

David's commitment to his community and civic engagement was a priority. David served on many Evanston and Chicago area commissions, as well as the Belvedere Club Building and Grounds and Yacht Club Committees. In addition to his wife, Mary Ann, David is survived by his three children Roy (Susanne), Cornelia (Jim Warren), and Eleanor (Michael Husman), and six grandchildren.

A Celebration of Life will be held on Saturday, Jan. 18 at 3:30 p.m., at the First Presbyterian Church of Evanston, 1427 Chicago Ave, Evanston, Ill. In lieu of flowers, donations in honor of David's memory may be made to the Belvedere Club Scholarship fund.