



Robert Lawrence Berry Jr.

Robert Lawrence Berry Jr., 92

Wednesday, December 18, 2013 - 2:12pm

Robert (Bob, Poppy) Lawrence Berry Jr. died peacefully in the company of his children on Dec. 12 in Norwalk, Conn. He was 92.

He was born on August 22, 1921 in Newark, N.J., to Robert Lawrence Berry, captain in the U.S. Navy and Navy attaché to President Woodrow Wilson, and Lucy Haldane Lindabury Berry. Bob was married for 64 years to his beloved wife Margaret (Peggy) Wight Berry who died in 2007.

Bob attended the Hill School and Admiral Farragut Academy and graduated from Yale University in 1943. He immediately went to officer candidate school and entered the Navy as a lieutenant, commanding a ship in the dangerous Pacific Theatre for the balance of World War II. His post-war career spanned many decades in what his family referred to as the oil business,

where he worked as executive vice president for Royal Petroleum Corporation, a subsidiary of Kerr-McGee. Even in his retirement he was recognized as a successful leader and was sought out for his knowledge of the oil business and relationships in the industry.

The Berry connections to Martha's Vineyard go back to the early days, when there were very few settlers. Bob's grandfather Albert Seaton Berry, a member of the U.S. House of Representatives from Kentucky and a confederate officer in the Civil War, and his great uncle Nathaniel Southgate Shaler, a union officer in the Civil War, were early residents of the Island, living on what is now Indian Hill and Seven Gates Farm respectively in the late 1800s. Mr. Shaler, a geology professor at Harvard, studied and published books about the rock formations on the North Shore, which was the farthest tip of the receding glaciers from the Ice Age and a laboratory for his well-known research.

Many stories were passed down about the horse and carriage rides from the ferry landing on West Chop out to Seven Gates, hitching up the horses and taking the bumpy ride down the rutted roads from West Tisbury into town for supplies, or about the sunny days on the farm beach near our old home, which our family still calls Our Beach. Even in the lifetimes of Bob's children, milk produced on the farm was delivered to the door in glass bottles.

Though his business took his family back and forth a few times from New England to Texas, Bob and Peggy Berry always called the Vineyard their home. Their children are blessed with childhood memories of summers first on Seven Gates Farm and then Edgartown. The two of them officially retired in 1982 and were year-round residents at their cherished home on Eel Pond. Both Bob and Peggy were avid beach and trail walkers, he constantly scanning the shores for beach glass or skipping stones and she enjoying a sunny day strolling through Sheriff's Meadow.

Bob was an active member of St. Andrew's Church, serving on their vestry. He was on the board of Sheriff's Meadow, and was an active volunteer at the senior center, Meals on Wheels, and Hospice of Martha's Vineyard. He was a companion to many Vineyarders in their final days and was a recipient of outstanding Hospice care himself.

His siblings include his sister Lilly Berry Smith (deceased) and his brother Richard Lindabury Berry of Indian Hill and Darien, Conn.

Dad/Poppy was a true inspiration to his large family, all of whom loved him so deeply: Robert L. Berry 3rd and his wife Gretchen, who both predeceased him, and their son Eric Shaler Berry; Lucy Berry Ackemann, her partner Harvey and her children Lucy, Alex, Mallory and Merrill; Andrew Wight Berry, his wife Peyton and their children Mason, Marcie and Emily; Jonathan Southgate Berry, his wife Susan and their children Robert 4th and Jonah; Jeffrey Savage Berry, his late wife Cassandra and their children Ellie, Jeb and Whit; and Margaret Berry Moscati and her children Spencer, Margaret, Hannah and Brett. Poppy also loved his six beautiful great-grandchildren. Zainah Kagimu, Bob's wonderful caregiver, confidant and dear friend on the Vineyard and in Norwalk for the last four years, has been a very special addition to the Berry family.

Bob was a trusted friend of many, unselfish and generous. He was an incredible influence on those he loved and cared for, and we will aspire to his example as we celebrate and remember our precious time with him.

He will be reunited with his wife Peggy at the Tower Hill cemetery when the family comes together to celebrate his wonderful life.

A memorial service is planned for him at St. Andrew's Church in Edgartown on Feb. 8.

In lieu of flowers, contributions may be made in his memory to Sheriff's Meadow or the Vineyard Conservation Society.