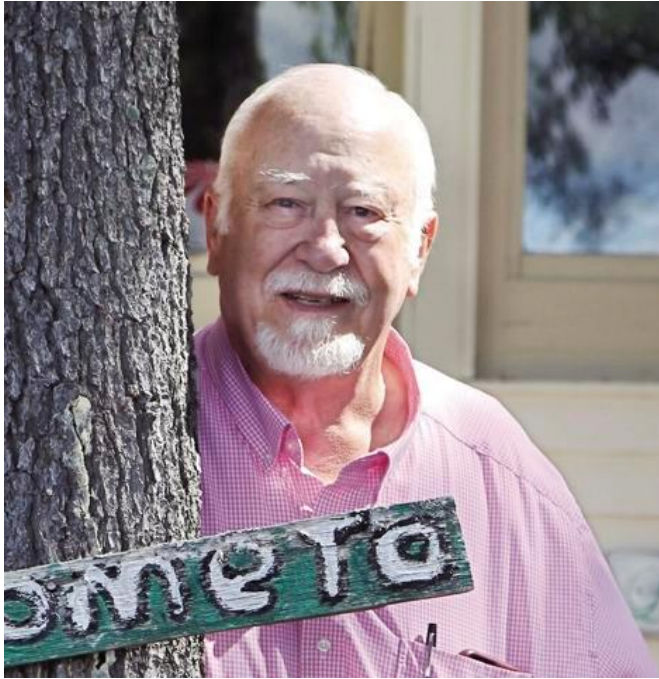


# Thomas Norton Tate Mullen, 78



CAMPTON — Thomas Norton Tate “Tom” Mullen — a fiercely devoted husband, father, grandfather, brother and friend, an uncompromising character and accomplished sailor, and a visionary developer of enduring communities from New Hampshire’s Lakes Region through its White Mountains — has crossed the bar after a period of illness and a full life. He was 78. Tom saw himself as a helmsman and chose to live life his way, especially when the rest of the fleet chased the wind in another direction. He seized every chance to connect with others and shaped the course of countless lives with the force of his big, buoyant personality.

The son of Norton and Helen Mullen, Tom grew up in Milton, Massachusetts, in a small suburban neighborhood filled with families, where his early inclination to test boundaries tried his parents’ patience. He told vivid stories of family trips to the beaches of Hingham and Cape Cod and the lakes and mountains of New Hampshire. He spent

summers at Camp Belknap and studied at the New Hampton School, where he excelled at writing, football and resisting conformity.

Tom followed his interest in journalism to Boston University, where he studied while earning his real estate license, and tasted the freedom of working for himself. He returned to New Hampshire on winter weekends to run the “Hustle Inn” where a mattress could be had in ski country for a few bucks a night, sheets not included. During the middle years of the Vietnam War, Tom enlisted in the U.S. Army and continued his journalism training at Fort Benjamin Harrison in Indiana. He was posted to Fort McNair in Washington, D.C., where he wrote for the Army’s “Passing Review” newsletter, hosted a radio report and learned to play the Martin guitar he won in a poker game. During his service he went on a blind date with Barbara Kessler, an adventurous schoolteacher working in Maryland, who Tom wooed with tuna noodle casserole and a boat ride on the Potomac. He would profess for the rest of his life that he knew she was The One at first sight.

Tom was honorably discharged in 1969 at the rank of Specialist E5 and that year he and Barbara married in Rhode Island, where Tom went to work for Boise Cascade, selling property for the company throughout New England. They moved to New Hampshire, where Tom was spending weekends selling real estate for Waterville Estates, a new community in the hills of Campton and Thornton that he spent the next two decades further developing alongside the many and varied projects he built throughout the region.

Those who worked with Tom at any point in his more than half century career in real estate sales and development remember his unrivaled tenacity and grand vision. He was a relentless force behind CMB Construction, Winterbrook Realty, the regional Chamber of Commerce, the Mill at Loon Mountain and Papermill Theater, the Grouse Point Club, the Someplace(s) Different Inns, the Page Hill Association, Conway Business Park, the Owl’s Nest Resort and Golf Club, numerous commercial plazas and hundreds of condominiums and custom homes.

In every project Tom was involved with, it was his intention to provide jobs, recreation, escape and economic opportunity wherever he saw potential. Above all, Tom worked to create places where people could realize their dreams and make memories, including the homes he built in Campton, where he and Barbara settled permanently, adding to their family first with Saint Bernard, then four children and a succession of formidable cats and loyal Labradors.

In 1982 Tom discovered a racoon-infested cottage on a half-acre patch of Welch Island on Lake Winnepesaukee and it became the place that meant the most to him on this earth. He bought the property on the spot and set about selling Barbara on island living, at least in the summer months. With characteristic imagination he created “a refuge from all the nonsense” and dubbed the final product WaterMullen Land.

Tom longed year-round for The Lakehouse and retreated there every year as soon after ice-out as his family would let him. He dreamed up the idea for his kids’ inter-island newspaper delivery route as their first business venture and loved watching them learn to sail and play epic games of capture-the-flag with their inseparable island gang. Once his grandchildren arrived Tom relished the sight of them sailing, swimming, learning to fish and driving a Boston Whaler they called The Shrimp Boat, and he made kids from any family feel especially at home at the lake.

Tom had little spare time but spent most of it racing sailboats on “The Big Lake,” in the Caribbean and Nantucket Sound and always made his presence known on the course. He was the son of a sailor and it was among his proudest achievements that he was instrumental in establishing the Lake Winnepesaukee Sailing Association’s Youth Sailing Program and its home at the David Adams Memorial Sailing Center in Gilford. Tom’s passion for sailing was infectious and he welcomed anyone to race with him regardless of skill, in the hope that the experience would leave them “with joy in their hearts,” no matter how tense the action. He treasured the friendships he made with fellow sailors, especially the famous Band of Angels, who ruled the infamous dockside joke-telling sessions at the annual Figawi Race.

Wherever the Mullens were, relatives, friends and strangers were always invited in whatever shape they arrived, and for however long they wanted or needed to stay. They hosted debaucherous ski weekends, half-serious poker nights, raucous St. Patrick's Day and New Year's Eve parties, epic sailing regattas and lobster bakes, Thanksgiving dinners and Christmas mornings with tables full of family and friends. At the center of it all, Tom was the wide-open, huge-hearted instigator who always got the party started the moment he stepped off the boat, barged in the door, came down the hall, picked up the microphone or, inevitably, pulled out his guitar to sing from his soul.

Tom had a rare gift for connecting with people, a genuine interest in their lives, and a gentle way of making them feel important. He gave back wherever he could and when he saw a need he worked to fill it, usually before anyone else. When Tom wanted to accomplish something, he drew from his experience and went in his own direction. If there was no path, he cut a trail. He won his share of battles (among them helping defeat the Northern Pass) but always knew when to put conflict or cares behind him, crack a joke and break out the rum. Anyone who joined in the good times left with a lighter heart. Most came back for more and always felt welcome.

Ever the Irishman, Tom knew how to tell a good story, make a masterful toast, lead a lady on the dance floor, peel a cucumber efficiently, crack a lobster, find the tallest, best Christmas tree, structure a detailed presentation and run an auction. He loved to call his kids and close friends on long car rides, hold his grandchildren, request a back scratch and stroke a dog's head. He knew when to share his emotions, help put out fires, be there for his friends, and trim his sails or let them fill. To a fault he could be ambitious, brave, proud, gutsy, determined, curious, stubborn, single-minded, resilient, easily wounded, generous, vulnerable and loyal, not to mention unapologetically romantic and excessively sentimental.

At the end of each day, he was content to pour himself a stiff drink, douse Barbara's healthy dinner with Nature's Seasons, then sit back and bask in the presence of his family, which was always foremost in his mind even if his attention was elsewhere. He took care of the people he cared about as best he could in the course of his life, which

ended too soon. Tom left an unfillable space at the head of the table, but he will never be gone from the lives he touched. Og så svinger vi på seidelen igjen, skål!

Tom, a.k.a. G-Dad/Hubby is survived by his wife of 52 years, Barbara; daughter, Kelly Wieser, her husband Paolo and their daughters, Ella and Aura Liesl; son, Ryan, his wife Heidi and their sons, Tate and Asher; daughter Shannon; son Evan, his wife Jenny and their sons Rowen and Lennon; sister, Jane Hildreth and family; and sister Nancy Erskine.

Calling hours will be held at the Mayhew Funeral Home in Plymouth, NH on Tuesday, 29 of March 2022, from 4 p.m.-6 p.m.

If you would like to honor Tom's memory, his family asks that you make a donation to the World Central Kitchen ([www.wck.org](http://www.wck.org)), which provides meals in humanitarian crises, or New Hampshire Lakes ([www.nhlakes.org](http://www.nhlakes.org)), which promotes clean water policies and inspires the public to care for the state's lakes.