

154

O. Stuart Chase



DEERFIELD - O. Stuart Chase, 84, of Deerfield, Massachusetts died Sunday evening, December 31, 2017, in the Fisher Home in Amherst.

Educated at Bement School, Eaglebrook School, Phillips Exeter Academy and Williams College, where he later served on the Board of Trustees, O. Stuart Chase devoted his life to learning and teaching. While studying abroad at the University of Oslo, Norway he met Edmonia Johnson of Bedford, Virginia and together they embarked on a joint career in education.

After a short tenure at Kents Hill School, Kents Hill, Maine, Stuart served as a lieutenant in the U.S. Air Force in Texas, Arizona, and California. From there, he followed his calling back to independent schools, first to Holderness School in Plymouth, New Hampshire, and then to North Country School in Lake Placid, New York. His return to New England was also a return to skiing; a member of the Williams College alpine racing team, Stuart passed on his love of skiing to his children and to his students.

In 1958, Stuart was hired to teach English at New Canaan Country School in New Canaan, Connecticut, and in 1962 he was appointed Assistant Headmaster under Henry Welles. With Monie and his sons, he enjoyed trips to the White Mountains of New Hampshire, where they hiked and played tennis. While at New Canaan Country School, Stuart earned a master's in English at Columbia University. The topic of his thesis, the influence of Owen Chase's "The Wreck of the Whaleship Essex on Herman Melville's 'Moby Dick'" reflects another of his enduring passions, life on the sea. An avid sailor, Stuart sailed with his family as a young man, and then with his wife, sons and grandchildren in his adult life. When his racing days were behind him, he served as Commodore of the Buzzards Yacht Club in Pocasset, Massachusetts and wrote delightful articles detailing its races for the local paper. In them, he shared his knowledge of wind and tide as well as strategy and tactics, and his perch on the point of his beloved Bassett's Island offered him an excellent vantage point.

In 1965, Stuart made an unannounced visit to Deerfield, Massachusetts to investigate the position of headmaster at Eaglebrook School, soon to be vacated by his father, C. Thurston Chase. His fondness for New Canaan Country School had not dimmed, and would not in future years, but in that visit he saw Eaglebrook, his own alma mater, with new eyes. In 1966, he and Monie began a remarkable career as the head of Eaglebrook, one that lasted for 36 years and that endures today, manifested by the growth of the campus and the approach to educating boys in the middle school years. With his warmth, determination, and an earnest belief in the goodness of all children, he charted a direction for the school that put the child at the center of all activity.

A young headmaster, only 33 years old, he developed a vision for what Eaglebrook School could be: a less formal, more nurturing school. Stuart pursued his goal of developing Eaglebrook as a school committed to the development of each individual child, a place devoted to the integration of the natural world within school life, and a community focused on the goals of giving children a safe and invigorating place to grow into "responsible, caring, and disciplined citizens and lifelong learners." While some did not embrace the cultural shift of the school that Stuart envisioned, it was not long before students and families appreciated the benefits of Stuart's ideas about discipline and program.

Blessed by a lovely setting, Eaglebrook School now benefited from Stuart's leadership as he built a robust outdoor program and continued the skiing tradition at the Easton Ski Area, improved by expanded trails and the Macomber Chair Lift. Stuart's expansion of the athletic program began in his inaugural year as head when he brought the sport of lacrosse to the campus.

In addition to building other sports facilities for swimming and skating, he fostered an extensive arts program that continues today. A student of piano and trombone, Stuart's own childhood was enhanced by his musical interests, and he championed the advancement of the Eaglebrook music program. Students will remember Mr. Chase for his support of their musical and athletic endeavors, a quick word of advice or encouragement, and his faithful attendance at school events even after his retirement from position of headmaster in 2002.

Since his retirement, Stuart remained active at Eaglebrook working with alumni groups and collecting reflections and anecdotes for a history of the school. He was a willing helpmate to his wife in her roles as teacher and theater director, and he served on the Eaglebrook board of trustees. He and Monie cherished their time together and with family at their home in Sanibel, Florida.

A native son of Deerfield, Stuart brought Eaglebrook closer to the community that he grew up in as a member of the board of the Franklin Land Trust and the Connecticut River Valley Watershed. Stuart was one of the founding members of the Junior Boarding School Association, and he served on the board of Salisbury School in Salisbury, Connecticut. Stuart is survived by Monie, his wife of 63 years, and his sons, and their families, Andrew, his wife Rachel and their children, Calla, Lucy, and Sam; and Tad, his wife Sandy and their children Harrison, Zander, and Davis.

A date for a memorial service will be set at a later time. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made to Fisher Home, Friends of Hospice Home, 1165 North Pleasant Street, Amherst, MA 01002 or to the O. Stuart Chase Fund for scholarships at Eaglebrook School, Deerfield, MA 01342.

Expressions of sympathy available at:
www.wrisleyfuneralhome.com



Funeral Home

Wrisley Funeral Home

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