

DAVID SWOPE OBITUARY

February 1, 2018

David Swope of Ossining, a prominent Westchester environmentalist, philanthropist, community leader and business owner, died Wednesday. He was 76.

Among his many roles he served as Chair of the Board of Trustees of Westchester Community College in Valhalla, the Teatown Lake Reservation Environmental Education Center in Ossining, and the Jacob Burns Film Center in Pleasantville. As a co-founder of Club Fit health and fitness centers in Briarcliff Manor and Jefferson Valley, he was a pioneer in the development of full service health and fitness membership clubs. He was also the owner of Tappan Hill in Tarrytown, now Abigail Kirsch catering.

Born in Mount Kisco, NY, September 24, 1941, he was the son of David and Sarah (Sally) Porter Swope. He was the third generation of his family to live in the Ossining area. His grandfather, Gerard Swope Sr., was President of General Electric and owned The Croft, a large equestrian-oriented estate which was donated by the family to form the original part of Teatown Lake Reservation.

David, known as Dee to family and friends, graduated from the Scarborough School in Briarcliff Manor and the Loomis School in Connecticut. He was a graduate of Harvard University and earned a law degree from Columbia University.

In the early 1960s he answered President Kennedy's call and joined the Peace Corps spending two and a half years in India. This proved to be a life-changing experience and forged his life-long interest and love of India and Indian art and culture. It also inspired him to form a legal aid society in Bombay (Mumbai.) Throughout his life he visited India and maintained an extensive network of Indian friends both at home and abroad.

After returning to the U.S., he worked as an attorney in Manhattan, first with the White & Case, and then the Davis Polk law firms. In the late 1970s his father became ill and David moved back to Ossining to assume his business interests which included the Briarcliff and Jefferson Valley Racquet Clubs and Tappan Hill. With his business partner, Beth Beck, they began adding exercise equipment and other facilities to what had been strictly tennis clubs. Over the ensuing decades they continued to expand and modernize the clubs making them among the first full-service clubs of their kind in the region and both clubs remain highly successful today.

As he entered his 60s, David gradually shifted away from his business interests and devoted his time to working with not-for-profit organizations. Throughout his adult life he played a major role in the evolution and growth of Teatown, and he also supported

numerous other environmental organizations and programs including the Westchester Land Trust and the Pace University Environmental Center. He spent many years on the Westchester Community College Board including overseeing the search for a new president to succeed long-time president Dr. Joseph Hankin. The effort culminated in the hiring Dr. Belinda Miles, the current President.

He took an early interest in the creation of and growth of the Jacob Burns Film Center and as board chairman worked to support the major expansion and outreach of its educational programming. He also served on the boards of the Ossining Children's Center and Phelps Memorial Hospital in Sleepy Hollow, and offered generous financial support to numerous other groups and organizations.

In addition to living in Westchester, from childhood David loved both short and long stays at his mother's family's ancestral cottage at Wauwinet on Nantucket where he welcomed guests and friends from back home as well as Nantucket. He supported land preservation efforts on the island and various non-profit organizations.

David traveled extensively having visited every continent and he had friends across the nation and the globe.

He is survived by his sister, Dorothea (Dorry) Swope, by many cousins and by hundreds of friends. Funeral services will be private. Those interested in making contributions in David's memory are asked to consider Teatown Lake Reservation, Westchester Community College, the Jacob Burns Film Center or a worthy organization of their choice.