

President of Edgartown National Bank Dies at Home on Tower Hill at Age of 97

By PHYLLIS MÉRAS

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Donald W. Vose, for 51 years the president of the Edgartown National Bank and for a dozen years the chairman of the board, died peacefully in his sleep at his Tower Hill home in Edgartown on Wednesday. He was 97.



Affable, neighborly and generous, Mr. Vose was known around Edgartown as much for his good deeds, his dapper dress, his storytelling and his warm heart as he was for his banking activities. At the time of his death, he was the senior past grand master of the Masons in Massachusetts.

He was born in Edgartown in 1911, a son of Leroy and Gladys (Pease) Vose. Many of his happy childhood days were spent at Tom's Neck Farm on Chappaquiddick that his maternal grandfather, Benjamin Warren Pease, owned. There, when farming chores were done, he would drive his grandfather's car to deliver poultry and vegetables, for no driver's license was

required then on Chappy. Better yet, after dark, he could spear eels in the mud and then see that they got to the wharf in Edgartown in time to be shipped to New York for dinners the next night.

If, instead, he chose to stay at his father's Tower Hill farm, Spring Valley Poultry Farm, he might hay, or go bluefishing in a boat of his father's. The Tower Hill land had been bought in 1903 by his grandfather, Julien W. Vose, a founder of the Edgartown National Bank who had first come to Edgartown on a visit from Brookline when he was just out of MIT.

Boating of one sort or another was a favorite childhood pastime and would remain such all his life long.

Donald Vose attended the Edgartown School and was a graduate of Cushing Academy in Ashbunham. He was interested in dramatics and active in theatrical productions at both schools. Later, he attended the Curry School of Expression in Boston with an eye to having a future in theatre or films. Many remarked on the similarity of his looks in his youth to Orson Welles. Indeed, Mr. Vose spent six months in Hollywood at one stage in his life exploring the possibility of a screen career, but decided in the end that he wished to come back East.

After the Curry School, he attended law school at Boston University before going to work in the 1940s for the Curtis Publishing Company in Boston, in sales promotion. Then, with a partner, he formed the Copley Advertising Agency. In 1940, after a previous marriage to Elizabeth Jones had ended in divorce, he married Drucille Bevin, whom he had known in his Cushing Academy school days, and they moved to Wellesley Hills. There, he frequently performed on stage in Wellesley Players Club productions, and in World War II when there were no young men to play roles for Barswallows productions at Wellesley College, he would sometimes be part of college productions. At Edgartown National Bank Christmas parties, he never failed to play Santa Claus. He was also known for spontaneous poetry recitations. His

children especially remember one at the time of his 50th wedding anniversary.

He and his wife and children and children's spouses were all on a trip to Disney World. As they waited in line to enter the Norway Pavilion at Epcot, suddenly Mr. Vose — to the delight of bystanders — began to recite Henry Wadsworth Longfellow's *The Skeleton in Armor*, filled with references to the far north and Norsemen.

Though his work in Boston was in advertising, he had a penchant for banking in his genes. Not only had his grandfather been a founder of the Edgartown National Bank, but his father — along with farming and later selling radios and appliances — had been the bank's president. So in 1957 Donald was delighted when he was elected to succeed his father as bank president. All the same, he kept his Wellesley Hills residence since his post did not require an on-site presence. But to make getting back and forth to the Vineyard for bank meetings easier, he asked the late Stephen Gentle to give him flying lessons, and soon he was commuting to bank meetings by air.

His first plane was a Piper Tri-Pacer, but he gave it up when it flipped over after landing in a snowdrift at the Katama Airpark. He was undaunted as a pilot, however, and soon bought a Piper Cherokee. He continued to fly until he was 83. He also happily drove an electric car for many years, remarking cheerily that it could always make it "to Gay Head and halfway back."



Mr. Vose and his wife on their Herreshoff Sunbeam in 1992.

Until 1998, he and his wife continued to divide their time between Wellesley Hills and Edgartown. When on the Vineyard, some of his happiest times were either in or out on the water. As a boy, he had raced Raven, a Dory class sailboat, in Edgartown. Fifty years later, he and Drucille were racing Sunbeam, their Herreshoff 12 1/2 in Edgartown Yacht Club races. They were presented with a special sportsmanship award in their later years. Mr. Vose continued to race until he was 90, and at the yacht club's 100th anniversary celebration three years ago, he was asked and delightedly agreed — to be aboard Miss Asia, Gerret D. Conover's vintage reviewing boat. As recently as two summers ago he was still going out on the water on good days on his son Warren's 38-foot cabin cruiser. In younger days, he was renowned for the length of time he could swim underwater.

After his marriage to Drucille their honeymoon was spent on a cruise to Rio de Janeiro, Brazil. Later, they frequently cruised in the Caribbean and in Mexican waters and in the South Pacific. Always a diplomat, Mr. Vose would frequently comment to his hostess after a dinner party that he had known three great chefs in his life — his grandmother Vose's cook, his chef on the French liner Normandie and "you."

A traveler on land as well as air and sea, he and Drucille attended their daughter Dianne's 1966 marriage to Thomas Durawa in Nigeria, where they were both Peace Corps volunteers.

"He embraced all kinds of people. He was an amazing storyteller, a very generous man. A lot of people who weren't his nieces and nephews at all called him Uncle Don and looked up to him," said Mark Lovewell, whose father John is his cousin.

Drucille Vose died in 1999. In the years since, Mr. Vose continued to travel — most recently to Hawaii where nieces and nephews have homes.

At home, he enjoyed entertaining and Sunday lunch at the Vose family boathouse was a ritual for generations of Egartonianians who would be invited out to a hamburger party after church. There,

Mr. Vose gleefully grilled the hamburgers. As many as 100 might be invited. These Sunday boathouse parties had been inaugurated by his father in the 1940s. He also delighted in grilling just the right cut of swordfish on a special grill outside his house.

“He had a round charcoal grill,” former fishmonger, good friend and bank director Everett H. Poole remembers. “He had to have two huge steaks cut so they would cover the entire grill. They had to be exactly two and 3/16 inches thick. He’d come up to my market at Menemsha with a wooden stick to measure them before he bought them.”



Donald Vose with his wife Drucille.

He also enjoyed dining out — esp[ecially with friends. Among h]is pastimes w[as] photography, of which he was a master. Taking family pictures, either stills or films, was a specialty. He also was an expert chess and checker player.

And being a Mason was a most important part of his life. At his front door, he kept a carved Scottish Rite Supreme Council cornerstone. He presided over many Masonic organizations and rose to the top of the Masonic fraternity, obtaining the honorary 33rd degree and becoming grand master of Masons in Massachusetts from 1973 to 1975. On the Island, he was

affiliated with Oriental-Martha's Vineyard Lodge, and the lodge room is named in his honor.

Since his birthday was Dec. 27, the opening day of the Masonic year when new officers are elected, he was sure to hear some 800 Masons heralding him with Happy Birthday when he was at Boston Grand Lodge meetings.

His community involvements included a leadership role in the capital campaign for the Martha's Vineyard Hospital in 1969. He served on the board of directors of the Dukes County Historical Society. He was active in the Congregational Church in Wellesley Hills and in the Federated Church in Edgartown. He had been chairman and was life member of the advisory board of the Salvation Army in Boston and was a member emeritus of the board of trustees of Cushing Academy. He was also a member emeritus of the board of governors of the Shrine Burns Hospital in Boston and was Potentate of Aleppo Temple in Wilmington, where he was instrumental in acquiring the temple building.

He is survived by four children and their spouses: Donna W. Vose and her husband Dr. Gregory Palermo of Plainfield, N.J. and Edgartown, Dennise Vose Croft and her husband Louis of Hubbardston, Dianne Vose Durawa and her husband Thomas of Edgartown and D. Warren Vose, Jr. and his wife Anne of Edgartown. He also leaves eight grandchildren and 14 great-grandchildren: Donna's children Alexandra Scott and James Rowell, Dennise's daughters Catherine Curry and Cornelia Carnazza, Dianne's sons Nathan Durawa and Matthew Durawa, and Warren's sons David Vose and Stuart Vose. He was predeceased by his sister, Marjorie Vose White. His cousin John Lovewell of Edgartown survives him. He is also survived by his companion Diana Sundeen.

A memorial service will be held at on Saturday, Oct. 18 at 2 p.m. at the Federated Church in Edgartown.

Gifts in his memory may be sent to the Federated Church, P.O. Box 249, Edgartown, MA 02539, the Vineyard Nursing

Association, P.O. Box 2568, Oak Bluffs, MA 02557, the Martha's Vineyard Museum, P.O. Box 1310, Edgartown, MA 02539, or the Masonic charity of your choice.