

Elihu Rees Obituary - Halifax, NS

Elihu Pugsley Rees (Eli to those who knew him), passed away in his happy place at the cottage in Chester, with his wife Wendy at his side. He leaves behind his children Elizabeth (Minton), Philip (Alyson), Nancy (Joe) and Edmond (Sheila) and the many members of their families.

Eli was born in Boston and was supposed to be a girl. Instead, he was the 5th son to join the family. He is survived by his brother Homer and predeceased by his brothers Bill, Mark and Morgan.

He survived his schooling (and more importantly the school sports teams) in New Hampshire at Phillips Exeter Academy. Eli never was much of a man for sports. He managed to extricate himself early from high school at the tender age of 16 and the end of Grade 11 by accepting a place at McGill University. It wasn't too much later that he made another smart move and became a Canadian.

Being in Montreal was Eli's first real taste of freedom and from all accounts, he made the most of it. He graduated from McGill Medicine in 1961 and left Montreal in 1968 with his young family, his neonatology specialty completed and many great friends that remained friends throughout his life.

After two years in Pittsburg as a research fellow, Eli packed up the car for a fun filled cross-country drive to Halifax with one more (and his last) child added to his still young family. This may be where one of his signature sayings "that's enough fun for one day" may have originated.

Once in Halifax, Eli flourished professionally. He headed the Neonatal Unit on the 8th floor of the IWK, taught medical students at Dalhousie, was a co-director of the Reproductive Care Program for 14 years and helped to launch the neonatal transport program for Nova Scotia. He loved working with his nursing team on 8 West and in the early years would host them every summer at his house on the Arm for a sail and beach BBQ. Early in his career, he was a strong advocate for the expanded role of the neonatal intensive care nurse. He also met his wife Wendy on 8 West (another fortuitous move on his part). Adding Wendy to his life brought him immense happiness in a partner and friend who shared so much of the same interests and ways of approaching life. Without Wendy, how would he have known that "fun" sweaters even existed?

Outside of work, Eli relished both embarrassing and scaring any and all of his four children. He would tell them the story of the Arm Monster that slithered up to their windows trying to get into their rooms at night. He would tell the story and scratch his nails on the window screen, then leave them in a pitch black room with the anticipation of being eaten. Once the children were too old for this story, he moved on to embarrassment. Walking like John Cleese in the Ministry of Silly Walks sketch provided him immense joy.

After "saving lives and stamping out disease" for 28 years, Eli retired from the IWK and the next stage of his life with Wendy truly began. He filled his days sailing on Toad V, puttering at the cottage, being a member and a head of the Canadian chapter of the Confrérie des chevaliers du Tastevin of Burgundy and seeing the world on small cruising ships. He and Wendy made it to all seven continents. He worked hard so he could play hard.

Eli had a select few things in his life that he truly loved. Wendy, his family, sailing, traveling, opera and classical music and a great red from Burgundy. He and Wendy spent many hours together planning their cruises, drinking wonderful wines and generally making the most out of the decades they had together.

Defying all odds of his very strict upbringing, Eli loved to be entertained. He loved irreverent, goofy, slapstick comedies and questionable action movies – the Marx Brothers, Monty Python and classic Arnie movies. Wendy worried once they would be asked to leave a theater he was laughing so hard and long at Monty Python's The Meaning of Life. We will miss making him laugh.

In lieu of flowers, Eli would appreciate if donations were made to Lunenburg Academy of Music (LAMP), Symphony Nova Scotia and the VON Lunenburg County.

The family would also like to extend a huge thank you to the VON Lunenburg County who took such great care of him for all of his scrapes and falls.

A service will be held at St Paul's Anglican Church at 1749 Argyle St in Halifax at 11:00am on Monday, July 21st.

For online condolences please visit the J.A. Snows website at: www.jasnowfuneralhome.com