



## Thomas J. Groark Jr.

November 16, 2018

Thomas J. Groark Jr., a prominent Hartford attorney and civic leader, died Nov. 16 in Bloomfield, after a courageous battle with Parkinson's Disease. He was 81.

Born Jan. 26, 1937 in Bridgeport, Tom was the son of Marie (LaHait) and Thomas J. Groark Sr. His early years were spent in Bridgeport, CT, Rye and Nyack, NY before the family, which included his sisters, Joan Groark Miller and the late Suzanne Groark Morgan, settled in New London.

Tom attended the Bulkeley School and graduated from New London High School in 1954 and the College of the Holy Cross in 1958.

After graduation he joined the Navy, completed Officer Candidate School in Newport, RI and was stationed in San Francisco and the Naval Air Station at Whidbey Island, WA. He served as an air intelligence officer on the aircraft carrier, USS Coral Sea.

After his service, he enrolled in the University of Connecticut School of Law. There he met his wife Eunice on the first day of school when he offered her a ride to lunch. They married in June 1964 after their second year of law school.

Moved by the civil rights battles in the South, Tom went to work for the Civil Rights Division of the US Justice Department after graduating from law school in 1965. He spent the majority of his time in Alabama and Mississippi deposing witnesses and victims of the infamous attack on civil rights marchers on the Edmund Pettus Bridge in Selma. He also investigated cases of discrimination and monitored polling locations to ensure people of all races could exercise their right to vote.

Tom left the Justice Department to work as a trial lawyer for Day Berry & Howard (now Day Pitney) law firm in Hartford. A former managing partner of the firm, he was a fellow at the American College of Trial Lawyers and its past state chair. He loved his work and many of his colleagues were close family friends.

Tom was an ardent believer in giving back to his community. In his early years, he helped start a pro bono law clinic in Hartford, and served as a mentor. He was president of the board of the Hartford Stage Co., trustee of Hartford College for Women, and chairman of the Board of Regents of the University of Hartford and the Greater Hartford Chamber of Commerce. A man of great faith, he was a trustee of the Cathedral of St. Joseph and a director of Holy Apostles College and Seminary.

Tom was very supportive of his wife's political career as she held elected office both in Hartford and the State of Connecticut. He also was involved with city and state government issues, including chairing the Governor's Commission on Judicial Reform under former Gov. M. Jodi Rell.

While he enjoyed a successful career, Tom was a true family man. Sundays were family days that he spent with his wife and three daughters, taking long walks at the reservoirs, playing basketball with his children and the neighbors, going for bike rides, hiking, skiing, and playing golf. He enjoyed a lifelong love of southeastern Connecticut. He had a beach house in Niantic, was a proud member of the Muffin Men, and loved to sail and race his Ensign at the Thames Yacht Club in New London. Tom regaled us all with stories of his adventures on the high seas.

A perennial Hartford Whalers season ticket holder, Tom enjoyed nights at the Hartford Civic Center cheering on his team. When the Whalers debated leaving the city, Tom was part of a group of corporate leaders that worked to keep the team in Hartford. He never was a Hurricanes fan. Thankfully, the ascension of UConn men's and women's basketball helped soften the blow. He was also a life-long Yankees fan, always finding opportunities to indoctrinate his children and grandchildren to Yankee fandom with trips to the Bronx. After his daughters married and family allegiance split between the Red Sox and the Yankees, he never hesitated to tease a son-in-law for rooting for the "wrong" team.

Tom was a man of great integrity and ethics but also possessed a quick wit and a charming disposition. Even in his final days at Duncaster, he had a twinkle in his eye, an easy way of making everyone around him laugh and charmed many of the wonderful people who took care of him. The family is especially grateful to his dedicated caregiver, Matilda Opoku.

In addition to his sister Joan of Bridgehampton, NY, Tom is survived by his daughters, Eunice (Kevin Clark) of Wellesley, MA; Marie (Marv Nelson) of Seattle, WA; Virginia (Josh Hale) of Chicago, IL; and seven grandchildren, Harry and Phoebe Clark; Louise, Owen

and Virginia Nelson; and Charlie and Tommy Hale. He was predeceased by his wife of 54 years, Eunice Strong Groark, who died in May 2018.

A funeral Mass will be celebrated at 10 a.m. Dec. 1 at the Church of St. Timothy, 1116 N. Main St. West Hartford. Calling hours will be held from 4 to 7 p.m. Friday Nov. 30 at Molloy Funeral Home 906 Farmington Ave, West Hartford.

Donations may be made in Thomas J. Groark's memory to support craniopharyngioma research on behalf of his grandson Harry Clark online at [dana-farber.org/give](https://dana-farber.org/give) or to Dana Farber Cancer Institute, P.O. Box 849168, Boston, MA 02284. Donations can also be made to the Duncaster Foundation Employee Education Fund, 20 Loeffler Road, Bloomfield, CT 06002.

# Events

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**NOV** **Calling Hours** 04:00PM - 07:00PM

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Molloy Funeral Home

906 Farmington Avenue, West Hartford, CT, US, 06119

**DEC** **Mass of Christian Burial** 10:00AM

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Church of St. Timothy

1116 North Main St, West Hartford, CT, US, 06117

# Comments

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“ Tom was a great leader of the Firm and I learned a great deal training under him. But his enduring memory to me was his great love of his family and his wonderful advice to me on two topics: first, work hard but take vacations with your entire family so that everyone stays close and has quality time together; and two, each child is different and so you must choose the school that best fits your child's talents and personality.

A very good man. Rest in peace.

**Dean and Valerie Cordiano** - December 03, 2018 at 09:46 AM

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“ Ocean Breeze Spray was purchased for the family of Thomas J. Groark Jr..



November 30, 2018 at 12:27 PM

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“ Diane Perry purchased the Lovely One Spathiphyllum Plant for the family of Thomas J. Groark Jr..



**Diane Perry** - November 29, 2018 at 07:09 PM

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“ Tom shared more than generously his wisdom and skills as a trial lawyer. I can still see him in my mind's eye coming to my junior associate office with a jury case to be tried invariably "next week". We discussed strategy and I tried the case. In a few weeks or a month he would return with another similar file, but this time more with more challenges and opportunities. These encounters repeated themselves and I became, inches at a time, a trial lawyer. My story is one repeated by a whole generation of lawyers at Day, Berry. When I visited Tom at Duncaster last winter, the work of the cruel diseases was apparent. But he still had a bit of that Irish gleam in his eye and he squeezed my hands when I spoke. I'd like to believe he sensed the gratitude and thanks I was trying to convey. Tom, may God bestow all gifts on you for all the wonderful things you did for those around you. Fran and Sally Morrison.

**Fran Morrison** - November 28, 2018 at 03:18 PM

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“ Dear Eunice,

Jenny and I have many fond memories of Tom and Eunice over the past 25 years. Tom served the University of Hartford as a Regent and Chairman and I had the pleasure of working with him on Board and Committee matters. His quiet, thoughtful counsel was invaluable and his deep integrity was admired by all who worked with him.

We feel privileged to have had Tom and Eunice as good friends and send you and the family our sincerest condolences on their passing.

Peter and Jenny Eio

**Peter Eio** - November 27, 2018 at 02:30 PM

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“ To Tom's children:

Your Dad and I became friends when we entered Bulkeley School in the fall of 1950, and remained good friends through our graduation from NLHS in June, 1954. He was a fine guy: smart, honest, reliable and good-humored. I was privileged to call him a friend. I still have our high school yearbook, with the nice message Tom wrote when we graduated.

Although I didn't see Tom much after high school, I remember him very well and I was deeply saddened to learn of his passing.

My sincere condolences.

Stuart Ebby

**Stuart Ebby** - November 27, 2018 at 11:31 AM

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“ Dear Eunice & Family,  
It was such a pleasure to know both your parents. I worked with your father as his secretary and it was such an honor. I will have such fond memories of them both as they always returned from their exotic trips with unique gifts. Mr. Groark was a kind soul.

Sending everyone my sincere condolences and prayers.

**Diane Charles** - November 27, 2018 at 09:52 AM

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“ Eunice your parents were wonderful people. I worked with your Dad As a regent at The University of Hartford and got to know them both quite well. I send my most sincere condolences on your great loss. Nancy Botcheller



**Nancy Botcheller** - November 26, 2018 at 03:43 PM

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“ Dear Eunice:  
You can be proud of your parents. I worked with your father at the Board of the University of Hartford and even more at the Board of the Holy Apostles College and Seminary of Cromwell and benefited from his quite but efficient leadership. We knew your mother well during the last years at Duncaster and admired her courage.  
Please accept our most sincere condolences .  
Jean-Pierre & Marie Claire van Rooy

**van Rooy Jean Pierre** - November 26, 2018 at 03:18 PM

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“ Sweetest Sunrise Bouquet was purchased for the family of Thomas J. Groark Jr..



November 26, 2018 at 11:07 AM

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“ Eunice, our sympathies. Your father sounds like a wonderful human being.

**Dennis&Cyetta McCormick** - November 22, 2018 at 10:20 AM