



Robert W. Cornell

August 25, 1925 - August 8, 2010

Robert Cornell, loving father to Richard, Delight Bruce Dobby, Elizabeth Gregory Wilkin, and Shelton David Wolfe; grandfather to Timothy, Emily, Ann, Joseph, Henry, Helen, Edward, Laura, and Robert; brother to Helen Thomas Koenig; and husband to Patricia Plummer, passed away unexpectedly on August 8, 2010. He was 84.

Dr. Cornell was a retired mechanical engineer who specialized in aeronautics and aerodynamics, and whose inventions included the prop fan used on the DC 10 airplane and the elbow joint used in the space suit worn on the moon by the Apollo 11 astronauts. After receiving his BS, MS, and Doctorate degrees from Yale University, Dr. Cornell began his career at Pratt & Whitney Aircraft, where he was Head of Stress Analysis & Vibration in 1947, before moving to Hamilton Standard, a division of United Technologies Corporation now known as Hamilton Sundstrand. He remained with Hamilton Standard from 1948-87, serving from 1963 on as Chief of Applied Mechanics and Aerodynamics. Dr. Cornell consulted on various NASA programs during the 1960s and 1970s, including the successful rescue of the stranded Apollo 13 mission in 1970, dramatized in the film of the same name.

A long-time resident of West Hartford, he moved to Duncaster in Bloomfield, CT, in 2004, where he served as a member of the Residents Association Council, co-ran the woodshop, and discovered the joy of stage management. Bob was considered a master puzzler, building three-dimensional works of art along with the flat variety, and he loved listening to and attending the opera and classical music performances. A gifted athlete his entire life, Bob specialized in the half-mile as an undergraduate on the Yale track team and became an avid tennis and squash player, adding paddle tennis to the mix in the 1990s. He also swam several times a week and enjoyed walking and hiking.

Robert Witherspoon Cornell was born in Orange, NJ, on August 16, 1925, the third child and second son of Edward Shelton and Helen Lawrence Cornell. Bob grew up in Larchmont, NY and graduated cum laude from The Taft School in 1942. He received his B.S. in Mechanical Engineering at the age of 19 with the Yale Class of 1945W and then went on to attend Mid-Shipman School at the U.S. Naval Academy, where he was commissioned as a Lieutenant JG in the United States Navy in August 1945. He received his MS in Mechanical Engineering in 1947 and his PhD in Engineering in 1950, again from

Yale. He served as an Adjunct Professor of Engineering at Yale in the 1980s and contributed articles to professional journals throughout his career.

Nearing retirement from Hamilton Standard, in 1984 Bob founded Cornell Consulting, later renamed Cornell Enterprises, of which he was Principal until his retirement in 2000.

Bob was active in local politics, running as Republican state senatorial candidate for the 5th District of CT in 1988 and 1994, and as Republican candidate for the 18th District in 1990. He served as treasurer on the board of directors of Yale Science and Engineering Association from 1969-2001, and on the boards of directors of the West Hartford Taxpayers Association from 1972-97, 2002-03 and Camp Agawam, Raymond, ME from 1993-99. Bob was a member of the Service Corps of Retired Executives SCORE from 1989-2002 and served as Chairman from 1998-2002. He was a Fellow of the American Society of Mechanical Engineers ASME and a member of Asylum Hill Congregational Church, The Hartford Golf Club, the Yale Club of Hartford, Sigma Xi, and the Engineering Honor Society, Tau Beta Phi.

Bob married Patricia Pat Plummer in 1950. She predeceased him in 2006, after 55 years of devoted marriage. They had four children and nine grandchildren, all of whom survive him, as does his sister.

A memorial service will be held on Saturday, August 14th at 11:30am at Asylum Hill Congregational Church 814 Asylum Ave. in Hartford. Donations may be made in Robert Cornell's memory to the Hospital for Special Care Foundation, 2150 Corbin Avenue, New Britain, CT 06053. Online expressions of sympathy may be made at www.molloyfuneralhome.com

Tribute Wall



“ Those of us who got to know Bob at Duncaster realized what an exceptional man he was. We will always miss him.##imported-begin##Janice Hawley##imported-end##

August 13, 2010 at 12:00 AM



“ Please accept our heartfelt condolences. There will never be another like him. An important part of his legacy is his nine grandchildren, many of whom I have known all their lives, and of whom he must have been very proud.##imported-begin##Peter Samek and family##imported-end##

August 11, 2010 at 12:00 AM



“ My condolences on this sad news. I saw your father from a distance at the Boar's Head festival in Hartford in December 2007, just a few weeks before my own father died. I'm sorry I didn't have a chance to speak to him at the time and catch up with the family.##imported-begin##Sarah Maxim##imported-end##

August 11, 2010 at 12:00 AM