

## LONG ISLAND / OBITUARIES

# J. Stewart McLaughlin, attorney who 'loved being a Bay Shore boy,' dies



J. Stewart McLaughlin, a third-generation Bay Shore resident, offered legal expertise and guidance to a number of organizations. Credit: Maggie Henry Shaw

**By Betsy Abraham**

Special to Newsday

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In the last five years, J. Stewart McLaughlin checked off quite a few destinations on his bucket list: Scandinavia, Cuba, Alaska. But for the lifelong Bay Shore resident, there was no place like home.

“There was so much about Bay Shore he loved,” said his daughter, Molly Milligan. “Bay Shore was a tremendous piece of who he was. He loved being at home.”

McLaughlin died on April 8 from complications from surgery. He was 82.

McLaughlin was born Jan. 22, 1938, at Southside Hospital to Phoebe Stewart McLaughlin and Warde G. McLaughlin, both educators. He earned his bachelor’s degree from Brown University and a law degree from Cornell University, capping off his education with a master’s degree in taxation and finance from New York University.

McLaughlin began working as a staff attorney in Manhattan, but his plans to build a career at a big law firm were cut short by the death of his father, at which point he moved back to Bay Shore to take care of his newly widowed mother. He joined a local law firm and became the sole partner once it dissolved, focusing his practice on real estate and estate law.

While his background was in law, McLaughlin’s expertise was sought after in the health care, education and management sectors as well. He served as the village attorney for Ocean Beach and the Kismet Fire

District, and was also a board member for Southside Hospital, serving as chairman of the board of directors during the merger with Northwell Hospital.

Among his other notable appointments was guiding Brunswick Hospital through its bankruptcy, serving as the receiver in 2001 and then acting president.

“He was absolutely instrumental in keeping its doors open, even now,” said Mini Singh, executive vice president at Brunswick Hospital.

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The Hon. Peter Fox Cohalan was on the State Supreme court when he appointed McLaughlin to the post of receiver.

“I knew from dealing with him that he would do a great job because of his administrative capabilities,” said Cohalan. “He was so dedicated and thorough. He studied every issue in which he was involved to the depths of the issue so he knew exactly what was

involved.”

At the time of his death, McLaughlin was still active on the Brunswick Hospital board, helping with internal and external support. He helped establish valuable relationships with politicians and publications, and was a “champion” for the hospital, Singh said, making regular visits to staff and patients.

“He would spend time with them and hear what they have to say,” Singh said. “He always championed for the underdog, that gave him a real sense of fulfillment.”

A Bay Shore High School graduate, McLaughlin gave back to his alma mater through involvement with the Evelyn Blose Holman Education Foundation. He ensured the organization was operating within the confines of the law and fulfilling its mission to provide scholarships to Bay Shore students.

“There was nothing in it for him other than the gratification of helping kids,” said Evelyn B. Holman, the former superintendent of Bay Shore Schools. “He was always cognizant of the fact that he had money to give his family what they needed, but not everybody has that. He would go the extra mile to help children.”

Bay Shore was in McLaughlin’s blood — his grandfather ran a fish market on Main Street at the turn of the century and his father was the principal of Bay Shore High School for more than 20 years. McLaughlin “loved being a Bay Shore boy,” said Milligan, and he expressed that love through involvement in the Bay

Shore Chamber of Commerce, the Bay Shore Rotary Club, and St. Peter's By-the-Sea Episcopal Church.

A self-proclaimed bachelor, McLaughlin was 38 years old when he met his wife, Laura, at the Oak Beach Inn. They married in 1977, purchasing a home in Brightwaters and enjoying a life that Laura McLaughlin describes as "never boring." He was always willing to take visitors on a tour of Bay Shore, regaling his audience with stories told in his signature dry humor.

"It's difficult to imagine a Bay Shore without Stewart. This community was very proud of him," said Donna Periconi, president of the Bay Shore Chamber of Commerce. "That slogan that Rotary uses, 'service above self' — that was his mantra. He lived that."

In addition to his wife and daughter, McLaughlin is survived by his son-in-law, Sean Ryan Milligan, and one granddaughter. Private burial was held and a public memorial service will be held in the future.

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