

William Walter LeVeen Jr.

Died: September 18, 1986

“Jerry” died of a heart attack on Thursday, September 18, 1986 at the age of 46. He had three children: Julie, Lauren, and Jennifer.

At the time of his death he was a tugboat captain, but before that he had been a textile salesman in the family business (with “a brief departure to complete active duty in the U.S. Coast Guard Reserve,” as he later wrote) and a stock salesman on Wall Street.

Jerry grew up in Port Washington, New York, on the fabled north shore of Long Island about 25 miles outside New York City. The Green Book rattles off his high school achievements: student council, newspaper, yearbook, dramatics, and football. The Aegis notes he was in the yacht club as a freshman, in the outing club all four years, was on both the inter-fraternity and undergraduate councils his senior year, and majored in history.

He was also a member of Delta Kappa Epsilon (DKE or “Deke”), and by the time of his graduation had been both its social chairman and president. All these roles may have fueled and reflected his outsize personality

His given name was William. But as our classmate, and Jerry’s fraternity brother and roommate for three years, Marsh Bates (also deceased), wrote in May 1992, “Everyone — *everyone* — called him ‘Jerry.’ A very few of us could get away with ‘Pig Trousers.’ He liked Dartmouth, where he knew a majority of students. He loved DKE, where he was president his senior year.”

Another classmate, Tom Conger, offered his own recollections after Jerry’s death. “Jerry was almost too smart for college,” Tom wrote. “He flourished as president of the Dirty Dekes, arranging to have Corey Ford for ‘faculty’ advisor. He wore Bermuda shorts under his graduation robes at Commencement, and let them show.”

But Jerry himself was perhaps his own best chronicler. He wrote a reflection for our 25th Reunion Yearbook shortly before his death in 1986. In it, he told how after graduation he joined his family’s business (Carleton Woolen Mills), but left after seven years.

In 1968 he set out to make his “mark” (his word) on Wall Street. After completing a training program at Merrill Lynch, he wrote, “I began selling stocks for mother Merrill and settled into a life of high pressure and big bucks.”

About five years later, and “tired of dealing with the public and feeling like a male prostitute,” he shifted over to institutional sales, he said. That didn’t last long. “It took me a year to realize that they must be a better way to earn a living. Office life was becoming a bore!!”

What to do, he must have thought. It was 1974. He like all of us was about 35 years old. It had become a turning point that had crept up on him.

“1974 arrived, and I had no doubts that I was not going to continue in the rat race much longer,” he wrote in his reflection 12 years later. “Tugboats appeared each day through my office window and in them I found my salvation! I quit my job, threw away my business suits and became a deck hand on a harbor tug for Moran Towing & Transportation Co. After four years I sat for a coast guard license, and I am presently a captain and a mate on a tugboat. Wealth has escaped me but happiness has not.”

Jerry wrote about his two older daughters Julie and Lauren, his divorce and remarriage to Michele (“the love of my life”), and their daughter Jennifer, “born in 1983 and it seems like life is starting all over again.” His work, he said takes up about 170 days per year, and the rest of the time he spends with his family.

He wrote with some anticipation about attending the class’s 25th Reunion in the summer of 1986 (though it turned out he didn’t).

“Should my schedule permit, I will definitely try to make it back for our 25th even though the DKE House is now only a fond memory. Even a poor tugboat captain should be able to scrape up enough to buy a keg, and to liven things up a bit, I might even be willing to tell a few stories about life on the high seas!!”

In September of 1986 at a relatively young age (his mid-forties), Jerry passed away. His father and brother Jeffrey attended Dartmouth, and his daughter Julie was a member of the class of 1987.