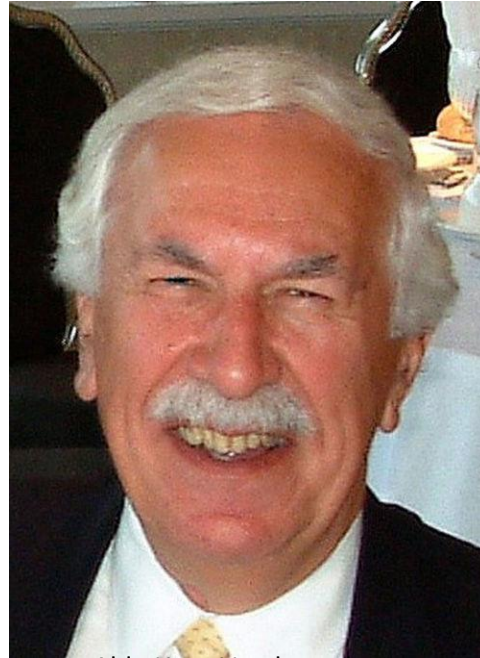


Aldo Hans Vandermolen

Invented backpack leafblower



Aldo Hans Vandermolen

Aldo Hans Vandermolen, 79, of Mountain Lakes, died Monday, July 17, 2017, at St. Clare's Hospital in Dover, after a five-year battle with glioblastoma.

A remarkable man who lived a remarkable life, he lived life to the fullest, taking on every challenge head-on with passion, energy and a sense of fun that rubbed off on everyone with whom he came into contact.

Born on Oct. 2, 1937 in Alkmaar, Holland, he moved with his family to Sao Paulo, Brazil, shortly after the end of World War II. Teased and taunted by his classmates for not being able to speak

Portuguese, the native tongue of Brazil, he showed the tenacity and perseverance that would serve him his entire life, and quickly learned the language (one of five languages he eventually became fluent in). Not only did he excel in school, he became a leader among his peers and graduated as class valedictorian in San Paolo in 1954.

The previous year, his family immigrated to Nutley, and to rejoin them in the United States, he worked to pay his own passage at age 16 on a freighter ship for four months along the South American coast.

He finished his senior year at Nutley High School in order to learn English (it is rumored he read the entire dictionary that year to learn the language). Upon graduation, he was the only member of his class to be accepted to Princeton University, and graduated with the class of 1959. He went on to earn a master of business administration degree from Harvard Business School in Boston, where he started a book binding business that paid his way through Harvard.

It was at Harvard where he met his future wife, Joan Frances Aldred, a secretary at the school who would type his papers. They were married on Aug. 10, 1962. Soon after his graduation from Harvard, they moved to Maplewood, and eventually bought a home in Essex Fells and started a family. They couple had four children. Mrs. Vandermolen predeceased him in 1986.

After a brief stint with Grey Advertising and later, Colgate-Palmolive, Mr. Vandermolen joined his father in the family import/export business, Vandermolen Corporation. Working side by side with his father, they grew the company together. He made one of the biggest contributions to the landscaping industry by creating the backpack leaf blower and subsequently, the first hand-held gas-powered leaf blower. The business thrived from 1954 to the early 1990s, switching manufacturing of the blowers from the Netherlands to Japan and forging ahead with innovation in design, light-weight materials and smaller, quieter, more efficient two-cycle engines. His

innovations and ideas were copied, unacknowledged and uncompensated, by numerous manufacturers in Japan.

Mr. Vandermolen also designed and held several patents for both gas-powered wood chippers and electronic bug killers. He took over as president of the company after his father died in 1990.

That same year, he joined the Caldwell Rotary Club, serving as president from 1997-1998. His passion for the Rotary Club and the 4-way test was immense and his contributions many. Not only was he instrumental in establishing the Willing Hearts Consignment Shop and continuing to grow the Caldwell Street Fair, he also guided and helped enable the organization to reach its Endowment Fund goal of a million dollars. Among the many awards he received from the club were three Paul Harris Fellow recognitions and an Outstanding Lifetime Achievement award for rendering great service above self, beneficial to all concerned.

Mr. Vandermolen lived for several years in the 1990s in Morristown with his partner Doris Kaiser Bonanno, before they eventually settled in Mountain Lakes. He loved travel, good food, good wines, good music and good friends.

A hockey player in his youth, he was a New Jersey Devils fan since the team's inception and also had a passion for the New York Giants and all things active. Physically active well into his 70s, he was regularly seen on the tennis courts in Normandy Beach and elsewhere throughout the Garden State until his passing.

He took his battle with glioblastoma farther than many thought possible, being part of only four percent of people his age who survive five years with the diagnosis. He showed courage,

strength, determination and his lifelong spirit of tenacity and perseverance right up to his death. He will be greatly missed by all who knew him.

He is survived by his caring partner, Doris; his four children, Garret, Jennifer, Elise and Evin and their respective spouses and partners; his sisters, Mariette and her husband, Daniel, and Irene; his grandchildren, Richard, Miyu, Caitlin, Lindsey, Cara, Alyssa, McCoy and Myles; and his second Kaiser Bonanno family daughters, Lori, Lisa, Linda, Leslie and Noni and their spouses, partners and children.

A memorial service will be held at 3 p.m. on Saturday, July 29, at St. Peter's Episcopal Church, 271 Roseland Ave, Essex Fells.

In lieu of flowers, friends are asked to consider a donation to either the Rotary Club of the Caldwell's Endowment Fund (RCCEF), P.O. Box 98, Caldwell, N.J., 07006 (please earmark donation for Willing Hearts/Street Fair); or St. Clare's Hospital Compassionate Hospice Care Unit, 400 West Blackwell St., Dover, N.J., 07801.