



Eric Worthington O'Brien, 81

Eric Worthington O'Brien of Medfield, MA., Mattapoisett, MA and Norfolk, MA died on January 7, 2021, peacefully with family by his side, after complications with pneumonia. He was 81.

Eric is survived by his wife of almost 54 years, Claudette Prefontaine O'Brien; his five children, Erin M. O'Brien, Kerry A. Durkin, Colleen L. O'Brien, Meghan A. Taylor and Peter T.C. O'Brien; his brother, Kevin Bryan and nine grandchildren: Ryan, Alison, Mikayla, Mara, Julia, Will, Ella, Dylan and Warren.

Eric was the son of Maurice O'Brien and Laura Cunningham O'Brien. He attended Newton High School, then went on to Fairfield University in Fairfield, CT. Upon graduation in 1961, Eric entered the United States Navy where he was a Lieutenant, serving on the USS Hank, USS Roberts and USS Huse. Upon exiting the Navy in 1965, Eric began his career as a sales representative for M.E. O'Brien and Sons, Inc., a family business. In 1983 he became the company's owner and President working tirelessly to grow the business. M.E. O'Brien and Sons is dedicated to assisting municipalities, developers and private corporations to design and build public spaces and urban landscapes. Eric's vision was to offer clients everything they needed to complete their recreation space.

Not only did he continue to build a thriving family business, but also worked toward the advancement of public parks. Eric passionately volunteered countless hours promoting and developing parks and recreation at local, regional and national levels starting with his involvement with the Town of Medfield, Massachusetts' Parks and Recreation Department (1973-1978, 1990-1991), the Downtown Study Commission and Open Space and Recreation Planning Committee (2013-2014). He also served as Medfield's Cemetery Commissioner where his priority was to plant trees all over Vinelake Cemetery to create a park-like setting. At the statewide (Massachusetts) level he served on the Governor's Blue-Ribbon Panel on Land Protection (1998) and the Olmsted Parks State Advisory Board (1980-1990).

Eric started his involvement with the National Recreation and Park Association (NRPA) in 1985. His various roles were member of the board of trustees (1985-1994), chair of the board of trustees (1995-1999), member of the national forum (2003-2008), and member of the strategic planning committee (2004). Eric was on the board of governors for the National Recreation and Park Foundation (NRPF) to support research, public policy, and public awareness efforts to advance parks, recreation, and environmental conservation (2006-2012). He served on the board of the Foundation for Sustainable Parks and Recreation created in 2012 and later served as the foundation's chair until 2017.

Eric served as trustee on the board of advisors for the National Association of Olmsted Parks (1984-1990), on the City Park Alliance Board of Directors (2006-2009), and as a world judge and corporate director for Nations in Bloom, Ltd. (1996-2003). Eric also served as a steering committee member for Clemson University's U.S. Play Coalition (2007-2015) and was on the board of directors for the Sajai Foundation, a nonprofit organization dedicated to teaching children about healthy lifestyle and nutrition decisions (2007-2010).

His activism led to many awards and recognitions including the 1992 New England Regional Council Award, 1998 New England Park and Recreation Association John F. Howard Award, 1998 Rhode Island Recreation and Park Association John Cronin Award, 2005 American Park and Recreation Society Citizen's Award, 2007 New England Park Association Award, 2009 Rhode Island Recreation and Park Association Hall of Fame, 2012 Connecticut Park and Recreation Association

Distinguished Service Award, 2013 Connecticut Park and Recreation Hall of Fame Inductee, 2014 National Recreation and Park Association Cornelius Amory Pugsley Award, and the 2015 New England Park Association President's Award.

He also served as editor of the New England Park Association's quarterly newsletter, *The Exchange*, for many years.

Eric was a true gentleman who enjoyed spending time with his family and friends. He loved playing golf, boating and reading. He was a faithful member of the Medfield Lions Club and for many years was a member of the MEMO business organization in Medfield.

At this time, the family will have private services. Memorial Services will be held at a later date.

In lieu of flowers, the family asks that memorial contributions be made to the U.S. Play Coalition's Fran P. Mainella Play Conference Scholarship Fund. Tax-deductible donations can be made online at www.bit.ly/Give-Play or send checks payable to "US Play Coalition" to Stephanie Garst, US Play Coalition, 263 Lehotsky Hall, Clemson University, Clemson, SC 29634-0735