

Alexander Duane “Sandy” Welch



The world lost a standout man on June 15, 2023 when Alexander Duane Welch passed away peacefully at age 78.

Born in 1944 to the late Barbara and Alexander Welch in Pensacola, Florida, where his father was based in the Navy, Alex was raised to value service and do things properly. But he rebelled when needed. He grew up in Waban, Massachusetts, where the family moved when his father completed his service and became a labor lawyer. His grandfather was the CEO of then Boston institution, department store Jordan Marsh. His grandfather a few greats back, James Duane, was a Founding Father and first post-colonial Mayor of New York City. When Alex grew up, five o'clock cocktail parties, golf events, and charity balls were de rigueur. Alex would caddy and work at Jordan Marsh during his breaks from the Mount Hermon school and around summers with cousins in Maine.

But don't let this gentility fool you. Serious and devilish in equal measure, Alex had a wicked sense of humor and an endless capacity for practical jokes. If love can be measured by the number of times peanut butter was spread where it didn't belong (like on telephone earpieces), his family were well-loved. He also had a penchant for small-scale arson. Over the course of his life, carpets, closets, hornet nests, and front lawns were inadvertently burned in the name of ambiance or pest control. And those are just the incidents we know about.

He received an ROTC scholarship and attended Tufts University to study history. After graduating, his service in the Marine Corps brought him to the Defense Language Institute in California (where he learned Indonesian), the USS Intrepid for exercises off the coast of Canada, the DMZ in Korea, and ultimately to Vietnam. The Marine Corps was in many ways his core, the centrifugal force for brotherhood and friendship, and the subject of many a great tale told often late into the night.

After Vietnam, he continued to chart an explorer's course, raising a family and frequently moving around the world, living in Jakarta, Singapore and Melbourne working for companies like Gillette, L'Oreal, Alcoa, and Richardson-Vicks. When Alex and his first wife divorced, Alex became a full-time Dad with a capital "D" to a 12-year-old daughter and 6-year-old son. He moved back to Melbourne for a job with a digital marketing start-up so his children could be close to extended family there. His hours were long and dinners were feast or famine. His son once ate an apple core. So it was to everyone's delight that he met Anne Marie, a strong-willed, sensible New Yorker who shared a sense of humor and his passion for learning and curiosity about the world. He convinced her to become his wife and she put things right. They built a life together over 35 years worthy of a novel, living in Hong Kong, Los Angeles, and ultimately Princeton, with many travels in between. Sailing on the Chesapeake was a particular love, and they went on expeditions as often as they could. Both competitive people, there was some vying for the captain role and control of the tiller. But Alex soon realized he was best cast as first mate.

When physical limitations curtailed Alex's travels, he kept exploring by connecting with others and through books, often on history. The last trip he wanted to take was to the Civil War battlefield in Antietam with his son and the last book he read only weeks before he passed was Ron Chernow's 1,104-page opus *Grant*. But even more than his constant curiosity, it was his generosity people valued above all. He had an acute sense of just what people needed — whether you were close family or someone he met in everyday life. Every interaction was an opportunity for connection. And this thread will continue through those who survive him: his wife, Anne Marie; brothers Bruce and Chris; two children, Deanna and Cameron, and their respective partners, Stephen and Carolyn; many cousins; and three beloved grandchildren Ava, Logan, and Owen, who knew him affectionately as Grandpa Sandy. He signed his emails and texts to them: "Love GPS" — a fitting moniker for a man famous for the world's longest short-cuts.

Service in celebration of his life will be held at 2 p.m. on Monday, June 26 at Nassau Presbyterian Church, where the family are longtime members and grateful for shared comfort in faith.

In lieu of flowers, donations can be made to the Marine Corps Scholarship Foundation (mcsf.org).

Arrangements are under the direction of Mather-Hodge Funeral Home, Princeton.

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